United Nations S/PV.8382

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8382nd meeting

Thursday, 25 October 2018, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Soliz/Mrs. Cordova Soria	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Adom
	Equatorial Guinea	Mrs. Mele Colifa
	Ethiopia	Mr. Amde
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Ms. Brandt
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Kuzmin
	Sweden	Ms. Wallström
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Promoting the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and sustaining peace through women's political and economic empowerment

Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2018/900)

Letter dated 9 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2018/904)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Election in Ethiopia

The President: In my national capacity, I should like to break with protocol. We all woke up this morning to the very good news that, today, Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde has been elected the first woman President of Ethiopia. I think that news is a very good way to start this important debate.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Women and peace and security

Promoting the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and sustaining peace through women's political and economic empowerment

Report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2018/900)

Letter dated 9 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2018/904)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Paraguay, the Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Viet Nam to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; and Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah, General Director of the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite the following to participate in this meeting: Her Excellency Ms. Mara Marinaki, Principal Adviser on Gender and the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and Peace and Security of the European External Action Service of the European Union; Ms. Narjes Saidane, Permanent Observer of the International Organization of la Francophonie to the United Nations; Ms. Amarsanaa Darisuren, Senior Adviser on Gender Issues of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; and Ms. Clare Hutchinson, Special Representative of the NATO Secretary-General of for Women, Peace and Security.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations to participate in this meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/900, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security.

I wish to also draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/904, which contains a letter dated 9 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, and give him the floor.

The Secretary-General (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the presidency of Bolivia for give me the opportunity to address the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda through the political and economic empowerment of women. I congratulate the Council on its efforts this past year to increase the number of speakers from civil society, for the work of its group of experts on women and peace and security, and to

achieve parity between genders and guarantee the gender perspective among the speakers during the presidencies of some of its members.

(*spoke in French*)

Never, over the past 30 years, has the number of countries in the grip of some form of violent conflict been so high. Forced displacements due to wars and persecution are more numerous than never. Climate change and underdevelopment are increasingly threatening to our security, while the question of human rights has been relegated to the background. There is every reason to worry, but we must resist the ambient pessimism and not lose sight of the fact that solutions exist. Hope has always guided our steps in the action we collectively take on behalf of women and peace and security. This is in issue that promises change, which includes many elements we need to address the complex challenges the world is facing: climate change, disarmament, equality and inclusion. It is also a fundamental question in terms of reaching our main goal of preventing conflict and human suffering.

(*spoke in English*)

Over the past year, we have seen positive examples of progress. Women's organizations continue to have an impact, from keeping dialogue alive in Guinea Bissau to rebuilding communities in Colombia. In the Central African Republic and Mali, women successfully contributed to negotiating between armed actors to halt the escalation of intercommunal tensions. In the Syrian Arab Republic, women have negotiated local ceasefires, mediated the creation of civilian safe zones and coordinated humanitarian and relief initiatives; they have done similarly in Yemen.

I can personally attest to the critical importance of the work done by the women peacemakers I have met around the world, from Mali to Bangladesh. Here at the United Nations, the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund is channeling resources to women's organizations that need them. The Peacebuilding Fund invests more than 30 per cent of its resources in gender equality programming, and a growing number of donors are earmarking funds for gender equality.

We are placing this agenda at the heart of our partnerships with regional organizations. The Deputy Secretary-General has made several high-level missions with the African Union, focused on women, peace and security and development. Last month, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Dr. Denis Mukwege and Ms. Nadia Murad, two champions of women, peace and security who exemplify the power of individuals to make a difference and the fact that survivors and advocates are best placed to determine the changes needed to build sustainable peace.

But despite this progress in some areas, the facts on the ground show that we still have far to go. The participation of women in formal peace processes remains extremely limited. Between 1990 and 2017, women constituted just 2 per cent of mediators, 8 per cent of negotiators and 5 per cent of witnesses and signatories in all major peace processes. Conflict continues to have a devastating effect on women and girls. The United Nations documented more than 800 cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2017 — a 56 per cent increase since 2016.

Women human rights defenders, political leaders, journalists and activists, who play an important role in addressing the root causes of conflict, are targeted at alarming rates. Women's marginalization, lack of access to health and education services, and economic disempowerment continue to be both a cause and an effect of conflict. Funding for programmes to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in countries affected by conflict is just 5 per cent of total bilateral aid to such countries.

The evidence linking gender equality and peace was recently set out in our joint study with the World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*. It is convincing and well-known. Maybe that is why the list of speakers for this debate is so long every year In 2015, the open debate on this item had the highest number of speakers in the history of the Security Council (see S/PV.7533).

But there is a significant gap between what we say in this Chamber and what we do outside it. Every year, we make laudable commitments, but they are not backed with the requisite financial and political support. We repeat statistics about the sustainability of inclusive peace processes, but that is not how we mediate most conflicts. We extol the positive influence of women peacebuilders, but provide little space for their participation. We rely heavily on women's organizations, but do not fund them adequately. We recognize the importance of gender analysis, but cut the budgets for such expertise. To address this gap, I intend to prioritize several action points in the coming year.

First, gender parity has the greatest potential impact on effectiveness and credibility in our field operations. But this is where the numbers are lowest, and the rate of change is slowest. Women now comprise 41 per cent of heads and deputy heads of our peace operations — more than ever before. Their differing perspectives are already having a positive impact, but the number of women in peace operations overall has stagnated. Without decisive action, they will go backwards as some missions are downsized. I have therefore formed a working group to put emergency measures in place to address this issue. Some elements will need approval from Member States, and I hope the commitment of the participants in this Chamber today will be reflected in their support for these reforms when we seize the General Assembly to change some of our rules and regulations.

It is also crippling to our credibility and protection-capacity that women represent only 4 per cent of our military peacekeepers and 10 per cent of police. The United Nations fully supports the innovative efforts launched by Member States this year to incentivize greater representation.

I remain committed to ending all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse within the United Nations — one of the first initiatives I took when I assumed office. I will continue to work with my Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, the Victims' Rights Advocate and Member States on this issue. I am pleased that nearly 100 Member States have now signed voluntary compacts with us to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse, and I call on others to join them. The Circle of Leadership of Heads of State and Government is committed to zero tolerance, to preventing and ending this scourge and to addressing its impact effectively and humanely.

Secondly, with respect to mediation, we know that the meaningful participation of women is directly linked to more sustainable peace. And yet we continue to support and lead processes that are not inclusive. The establishment of several women's networks in recent years is an important trend, as they can play a role in influencing processes for the better. I am pleased that members of my High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation — which is gender-balanced to the level of full parity — are here this week to work with representatives of these networks. Women's participation should not be confined to advisory roles or parallel structures, and I welcome the growing sense of urgency from Member States, civil society and others to ensure that we are designing more effective peace processes with much stronger women's participation.

Thirdly, a gendered approach to peace and security means supporting peacebuilding at the local level, even during conflict. As peace processes falter at the national and international level, we must consistently support the local women's groups that negotiate humanitarian access and support community resilience, learn from them and build peace from the ground up.

Fourthly, financing this agenda is critical, and the United Nations intends to lead by example. I have created a high-level task force to review our funding on gender equality, including in the peace and security pillar. I will hold United Nations entities accountable with respect to their commitments to increasing spending on women and peace and security, with a target of reaching or exceeding 15 per cent by 2020.

Finally, from now on I will include gender analysis in my reports to the Security Council whenever it is relevant to inform its decisions.

In two years' time, we will mark the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), the fifth anniversary of the global agreement giving rise to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration. Gender equality and women's participation are a unifying thread running through the implementation of these landmark agreements for human rights, sustainable development, and peace and security. In preparation for these landmark dates, my report on women and peace and security next year will include an assessment of implementation of the relevant recommendations in the three peace and security reviews undertaken in 2015, particularly the Global Study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), together with resolution 2242 (2015), adopted three years ago. The findings and recommendations from this assessment will be the basis for increased efforts in the year leading up to 2020. I encourage Member States to initiate similar preparations and reviews.

As we look forward, I urge the Security Council to invest in gender equality and women's empowerment, not only as an end in themselves, but as a critical means of achieving our overarching aim of preventing and ending conflict and building peace and prosperity in the world for all.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary General for his briefing and above all for the leadership he has shown in this and other areas.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka.

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka: It is an honour for me to address the Security Council and speak on the Secretary-General's report on women and peace and security (S/2018/900).

I thank Bolivia for all the support it has given us in preparing for today's debate.

The Secretary-Genera's report sounds a loud alarm bell on systemic failures to bring women into peacemaking in a meaningful manner. Trends show that women are being excluded from peace processes. Those who do not wage war seem to be disqualified from making peace, while those who may be implicated in making war tend to find it easy to be at the peace table.

I, together with representatives from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, have just come back from a joint United Nations/African Union mission to South Sudan. The women we met there told us that they long for peace and to resume their lives. Their nearly five years of suffering from a civil war, which they kept on repeating they were not responsible for waging, was taking a toll on them, and they said, "we are here because we want to reconcile even though we have never quarrelled."

While they still fear for the future, they appreciated the Revitalized Agreement on the resolution of the conflict, which offers new hope for the country and an unmissable opportunity to build peace, with a 35 per cent quota for the representation of women. Their fears are bolstered, however, by the fact that, in these early days of the Revitalized Agreement, there is just one woman among the 10 persons nominated to be members of the National Pre-Transitional Committee, which is not the agreed 35 per cent.

The report today inescapably details how that is not an exception but the rule. How there is at the same time hope for progress, and how we are failing to make this hope a reality. Nevertheless, we can never and must not lose hope. It shows us an undeniable possibility with undeniable failures, which are costing the lives of women and girls, who, as we have said, suffer and die from a war they are not waging.

A year ago, in this Chamber, I raised the alarm at the numbers shown by the indicators we track year on year with regard to peace processes and mediation (see S/PV.8079). Today, I want to raise the alarm once more, with the hope that it will jolt us into greater action. Indicators show that we have stagnated or dropped again. For that reason, we have focused this year's report on the need for women's meaningful contribution to peace. We call on all of us to make sure that we take the much-needed concrete actions. We need the Security Council to be vigilant about the ending of superficial efforts to include women that do not genuinely extend the opportunity to influence outcomes. We also want to show that the extreme political marginalization at peace tables is often worse in the institutions set up to implement these agreements.

And we wanted to spotlight the many ways in which women keep on being active and resilient. Women in the front lines are negotiating ceasefires, civilian safe zones, the demobilization of fighters and humanitarian access at the local level. In Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan and the Central African Republic, they are drawing up protection plans at the community level. We want the States Members of the United Nations to pay due attention to these dynamics, make them visible in forums like the Security Council, and use them to support women's political agency, provide financial resources and enable women to do even more. The continued tolerance for the limited recognition of women's expertise and lived experience is a setback for all of us.

Statistics on women's involvement speak for themselves. On this issue, the report offers more numbers: between 1990 and 2017, under our watch, women constituted only 2 per cent of mediators, 8 per cent of negotiators and 5 per cent of witnesses and signatories in major peace processes. Only three of 11 agreements signed in 2017 contained provisions on gender equality, continuing last year's worrisome downward trend. Of the 1,500 agreements signed between 2000 and 2016, only 25 elevate the role of women in terms of their engagement in the implementation phase.

In Yemen, current efforts at resuming dialogue do not include women, beyond setting up observer bodies to advise the United Nations Special Envoy. Even in a consultative meeting in London this summer organized by the United Nations and convening 22 prominent Yemeni leaders to discuss the peace talks, only three Yemeni women were invited.

In Mali, women average a dismal 3 per cent of the membership of the multiple national committees set up to monitor and implement the Peace Agreement.

In the Central African Republic, mediation efforts are focused on the presidency and the 14 armed groups. They, too, exclude women altogether.

In Afghanistan, the Government and its international partners invest efforts in including women in the High Peace Council and provincial peace councils, but when it comes to actual talks with the Taliban, the absence of women is noticeable. Undeniably, there are possibilities, but there are also undeniable failures, and there are also determined women. In the 23 rounds of Afghanistan-Taliban peace talks held between 2005 and 2014, women were at the table just twice. Now that there are offers to resume peace talks without preconditions, Afghan women peacebuilders want to be at the table, and they want to make a difference.

Finally, a positive number: Security Council decisions about country-specific or regional situations that contain language on women and peace and security increased from 50 to 75 per cent. This must lead to increased action on the front lines. The number of women leaders and civil-society representatives who briefed the Security Council also increased significantly. I thank Council members for these efforts and their continued participation in the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security, currently co-chaired by Sweden and Peru, in collaboration with the United Kingdom. But we need to use all available diplomatic channels and political influence to ensure that these decisions in New York are making a difference on the ground, because this is simply not happening in the most meaningful way.

The bigger picture of gender inequality in conflict and post-conflict countries is something we need to continue to watch. Today's report gives us a broad picture of the many remaining areas where challenges remain to reaching equal representation of women in the vital processes of our nations. For example, only 16 per cent of parliamentarians in conflict-affected and post-conflict countries are women, the same percentage as last year and the year before. There is 20 per cent representation in countries that use quotas and just 12 per cent in countries that do not. It is for that reason that we appreciate the fact that our Secretary-General is leading from the front, and we call for special measures to be taken regarding the manner in which we are driving the parity process within the United Nations.

The Council just visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo ahead of crucial elections. Only 12 per cent of registered candidates are women, just as in the previous elections seven years ago, and women are suffering from intimidation. Of the 17 countries that have elected a woman Head of State or Government, none are post-conflict countries at this point. I will say this again, as I did last year: we need to heed the call and address the patterns that these numbers show us.

On our part, we will continue to follow up with the Council on how we can together address the situation with greater vigilance and make a significant difference.

It is not only women whose opportunities are being limited. In many conflict settings, girls are one and a half times more likely to be out of primary school, and whole communities therefore experience setbacks. The number of children lacking education in conflict areas calls for a concentrated response and solution involving schools and second-chance education.

Child marriage rates are also affected by war. In Yemen, the rate of child marriage was 66 per cent in 2017, 52 per cent last year and 32 per cent before the recent conflict erupted.

Unsurprisingly but tragically, in conflict and post-conflict countries maternal mortality rates are almost twice the global rate. Of the 830 women and adolescent girls who die every day from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth, 507 die in countries that are considered fragile because of conflict and disaster. To address these issues and support the regeneration of families and communities, we need strong and targeted investments in women in conflict areas. This is just not happening enough, despite the undeniable goodwill towards the women and peace and security agendas in conflict-affected countries.

This clear gender inequality in women's access to resources is not caused simply by the presence of conflict. It is also a reflection of the non-prioritization of women's needs and the relegation of women to small-scale and local peripheral initiatives. In the Sahel, where we visited with the Deputy Secretary-General, African Union representatives and Minister Wallström, we saw the dire poverty of the women and community in the Lake Chad basin. We saw households with no electricity in the part of the world that has the highest

penetration of the sun on Earth and is more suitable than anywhere else in the world for sustainable-energy generation from solar power. Yet clinics lack power and women have no cold storage for their fish or for the fresh produce needed for food security, which in some cases contributes to peace and security more than the efforts of the military.

In conflict-affected countries, only 11.5 per cent of landholders are women. Although bilateral aid to promote gender equality in fragile country situations rose by 17 per cent compared with the previous year, it still amounts to only 5 per cent of the total bilateral aid spent on programmes with gender equality as the primary objective. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, aid from the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development allocated to the promotion of gender equality was only $8 per capita last year. The same year, the United Nations documented a 56 per cent increase in sexual violence.

The share of the aid channeled through non-governmental women's organizations has stagnated. Our financial commitments just do not match the extent to which we rely on these groups. Yet there has been undeniable progress because the number of actions to be taken and the collaboration intended with civil society continue to be favoured as a way to operate; however, this must also translate into concrete action and better investment in such groups.

Civil-society and women's organizations have been failed in the midst of record-breaking numbers of side events at intergovernmental meetings. Our plea is to refocus our energies and resources. I believe that there is goodwill, and we all want what is best for women and girls. Even as we have disappointing indicators on women and girls, global military spending has reached $1.74 trillion, a 57 per cent increase since 2000. Some countries allocate more public money to the military than to education or health. Ninety per cent of grass-roots women's organizations working in areas directly impacted by terrorism and violent extremism state that current counter-terrorism measures have an adverse impact on the work for peace, women's rights and gender equality.

We must respond to the many violations against the human rights of women and girls within violent groups and to the social stigma, economic hardship and discrimination that women and girls experience when returning to their homes and communities when they have been part of such a group. These challenges are best addressed by actions that protect and promote the rights of victims and are fundamentally based in human rights law. Women human rights defenders are on the front lines and are fighting a lonely battle. Many die a lonely death from weapons that are meant to protect them.

Let us look ahead with hope and the knowledge of what we are capable of doing together. This includes what we can do with women, such as the African Women Leaders Network, which has been given a boost by the support of the German Government, and the focal points have already been established in 30 African countries.

We are already gearing up for the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), which will be an opportunity to shape the agenda for the next decade with new commitments and priorities. We have to start now to gear up for better results. We need more positive signs, such as those I saw in Somalia, where we need to help to accelerate the positive change. There will be opportunities for everyone to weigh in, including at next year's meeting of the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network in Windhoek, which will carry a special symbolism for those who have been part of this movement for a while.

For now, I want to share three priorities for 2020. This August, we mourned the loss of Kofi Annan. Part of his legacy was that the United Nations debated and decided to stop supporting peace agreements that included blanket amnesties. I think that, two decades later, it is time for the United Nations to have a similar conversation about supporting, brokering and paying for peace negotiations that exclude women. This issue is in the Council's hands. It was raised by women from civil society at the forum the Council was invited to earlier this week, at the initiative of Sweden.

Secondly, one of the many positive examples in the report is the Peacebuilding Fund's steadily growing support to projects advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Finding ways to make the 15 per cent minimum target a reality across all relevant entities and other peace and security funds is another important take that we can focus on going forward. Of course, joint programming on the rule of law in conflict and post-conflict areas, addressing the educational and economic resilience of women and multi-partner trust

funds in fragile settings should be at the start of all conversations about financing.

Finally, we need to do much more to protect women activists, peacebuilders and human rights defenders in conflict-affected countries. We applaud the historic participation of Palestinian women, representing civil society, in addressing the Security Council for the first time. We commend the Nobel Peace Prize Committee for recognizing Dr. Denis Mukwege and Ms. Nadia Murad for their advocacy on behalf of victims of wartime sexual violence. It is an example of the importance of this issue, to which my colleague the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Pramila Patten, devotes all her time and energy.

I have met many exceptionally courageous women in my many recent travels to Somalia, South Sudan and the Sahel, and my visit with Rohingya women refugees was no exception. Many of them are here today, but many could not be here.

In 2017, half of the women honoured in the annual tribute of the Association for Women in Development were murdered in conflict-affected countries, but the list is much longer when we include women political leaders, journalists, justice actors, security sector personnel, those perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons or who challenge traditional gender roles by simply being involved in public life. It is my strong wish that we will find the political will to do much more about the epidemic of the killing of women, which we have seen over this decade as it comes to a close.

Change is in our hands. Let us work for positive indicators for the next report, and let us make sure that the next report of the Secretary-General will be able to show that we are turning the corner.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Siniora Atallah.

Ms. Siniora Atallah: Today, I speak in my capacity as the General Director of the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling. I also speak on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. I speak to the Security Council as a peace leader and as a human rights defender who has witnessed, documented and spoken out for three decades about violations in the occupied Palestinian territory. Today, I bring to Council members the voices of Palestinian women, who still face violence, discrimination, deprivation and systematic violations of their human rights on a daily basis.

Mervat, a resident of the old city of Hebron, stepped out of her home one day to take out the garbage, when she was violently attacked by a group of settlers. Neighbours who heard Mervat's screams witnessed them beating her and raised the alarm. Mervat was four months pregnant at the time and lost her baby as a result of her injuries.

Last September, Sana, living in Jerusalem, awoke to find Israeli police at her front door. A young mother of two, she listened shocked as they informed her that they were going to demolish her home under the pretext that her family did not have a building permit. They were given one week to move out.

Earlier this May, during the recent marches of return on the eastern border of Gaza, Nisreen, a mother of three, was shot in the chest by the Israeli military. Nisreen had been peacefully demonstrating with a group of women and children. Two days later, Alan was shot in the stomach while walking with her friends to watch folk dancers perform near the same border.

These stories illustrate what life under occupation is like for ordinary Palestinian women and girls. They live at risk of violent attacks while going about their daily lives. Their homes can be snatched from them at a moment's notice. Participation in public life is under a shadow of fear.

The Israeli occupation and the resulting humanitarian crisis are deeply gendered and exacerbate existing gender inequalities. Women disproportionately endure the violence of occupation borne by all Palestinians, and often with gender-specific consequences. Palestinian women face attacks, threats, intimidation, discrimination and restrictions on their movements by the Israeli military on a daily basis. Night raids, the destruction of property and violence at checkpoints are also routinely committed by the occupying forces. Palestinian women lose their homes and cannot reunite with their families owing to restrictions or the denial of residency permits. They look on as their husbands and children are detained, attacked or killed in front of them. Women often suffer gender-specific torture in Israeli prisons, and the discrimination experienced by refugee women is compounded by displacement.

The occupation reinforces the patriarchal structures of Palestinian society. Women must earn a living on top of their responsibilities to care for the young, sick or injured, often isolating them from their communities and public life. In efforts to protect their families from violence or arrest, women often become prison guards to their own children. Political violence in the public sphere leads to spikes in violence in the private sphere. Domestic violence is shockingly high and femicide is on the increase.

Not only do women suffer these abuses; they are also starved of the resources to respond to them. The fragile conditions created by the occupation mean that Palestinian women lack access to justice and the means to live. The recent funding cuts to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East have also disproportionately impacted the lives of Palestinian women, especially in health and education. The destruction of infrastructure has had a devastating impact on families and the lives of women and girls by cutting off their access to food, water, sanitation, electricity and life-saving medical care. As the Special Rapporteur on violence against women noted in 2017, economic deprivation and high levels of unemployment, compounded by the pressure of the occupation, have also made Palestinian women vulnerable to violence. More resources for Palestinian women not only would make them less prone to violence but are essential to their participation in their communities.

For women, the fear and deprivation accompanying occupation have meant their being unable to join public life or defend our rights. The Israeli occupation has shrunk the space for a free and independent civil society by banning peaceful demonstrations and persecuting journalists who are critical of the occupation. Women human rights defenders are accused of incitement by Israel. In July, thousands of Palestinian women marched on the eastern borders of the Gaza Strip in peaceful protest against the occupation. Israeli snipers shot at and used tear gas against protesters, injuring thousands and killing almost 100 civilians. In addition, civil society volunteers — including medical workers — are targeted by the army, despite being clearly identifiable in uniform. Female journalists reporting on the conflict are assaulted and detained. Retaliation for their work deters them from reporting on the occupation. This serves to further marginalize women's voices from the public sphere.

In committing to women and peace and security, the Security Council recognized the importance of women's meaningful participation and that without women, there can be no peace. The lives of Palestinian women are evidence that these commitments have not been met. Although women have been at the forefront of the Palestinian liberation movement and the Palestinian Authority worked with grass-roots women leaders to create the national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000), few have been represented in peace talks. Women are underrepresented, both as official negotiators and as technical advisers, despite clear evidence that they have often been critical in working across political divides, building grass-roots support for peace and providing essential expertise on human rights and issues like health and access to resources.

Little space has been made to integrate Palestinian women's concerns into key political processes, including for achieving Palestinian statehood and for national reconciliation. Representation of women in key decision-making positions, including in Palestinian Authority institutions, is barely 5 per cent. Only 4 out of 30 members of the internal reconciliation team are women. Palestinian women have not been consulted in shaping political or humanitarian responses in our country and our needs have therefore been overlooked.

The situation of Palestinian women today has been further compounded by a real and serious crisis of legitimacy and trust in the United Nations. The Security Council was first established to maintain peace and security, not to manage conflict. Its chronic inability to take effective action to end the Israeli occupation, with little hope that this will change, exemplifies that crisis. On the contrary, Member States continue to trade arms with and offer political support to Israel, while Israel continues to impose policies and practices that are in clear violation of international law.

Israel's occupation and the prevailing culture of impunity have not only destroyed the lives of Palestinian women and men; they have jeopardized peace and security across the Middle East. The international community can no longer look away from the plight of my people, who have endured the world's longest occupation. We call on the Security Council to address the root causes of the conflict and support our right to self-determination. We call for an end to the occupation as the first step towards building peace and for women to be at the forefront of these efforts.

Therefore, the Security Council must act to ensure women's meaningful participation in conflict prevention, democratic transition, reconciliation efforts, and any humanitarian work; call on the Palestinian Authority to implement its 1325 national action plan by allocating sufficient funds and providing high-level and ongoing political support for the meaningful participation of Palestinian women in all stages of peace processes; call upon Israel to end its military occupation and settlement expansion, commit to a political solution and immediately cease violations of its commitments under international law; and call on States to stop exporting arms to Israel, where there is a risk that they may be used to commit serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, in line with the Arms Trade Treaty. Governments, arms companies and arms dealers must be held accountable for transferring arms in situations where they fuel conflict and grave breaches of international law.

The Security Council must also act to end the culture of impunity and ensure accountability for abuses and violations against women and women human rights defenders by Israeli forces or any other actor; ensure that all humanitarian efforts are gender-responsive; and use all tools at its disposal to ensure women's meaningful participation and that gender analysis is integrated into any discussions of the situation, including by adding the occupied Palestinian territory to the agenda of the informal expert group on women and peace and security and inviting women civil society representatives to brief the Council during country-specific discussions.

Palestinian women who have grown up under the occupation have been on the front lines defending our lands, our homes and our families. We continue to lead efforts to demand accountability and advocate for equality. We therefore have not only the right, but also the ability, the expertise and the experience to forge the path towards sustainable, just and durable peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Siniora Atallah for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Ms. Wallström (Sweden): Council members may be aware that when the formal peace talks between the Colombian Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) opened in Havana in November 2012, only 1 of the 20 negotiators around the table was a woman. A year later, civil society leaders organized the first-ever national summit on women and peace, and from that summit came a clear demand for an inclusive peace process. Two years later, women comprised 20 per cent of the Government's negotiating team and 43 per cent of the FARC representatives.

What happened? By organizing themselves, these women contributed in crucial ways to the peacemaking effort, including by broadening the agenda. Women addressed some of the primary grievances of affected communities, such as land restitution and the right to justice and reparations for victims. Women furthermore negotiated local ceasefires and thereby improved the local security situations in towns and villages across the country.

In addition, because of the demands of female negotiators and civil society, FARC undertook several confidence-building measures — such as an apology process and the release of child soldiers — that allowed the process to continue, thereby increasing accountability. Finally, women built coalitions and rallied public support in favour of the peace talks. By repairing relations in communities affected by the conflict, women and civil society laid the groundwork for the peacebuilding efforts necessary to the long-term success of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. The peace agreement in Colombia is a model when it comes to inclusion. Women were key to the success of the peace process and their continued involvement will be key in its implementation, as well as for consolidating the peace.

I thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2018/900), which made for chilling reading, in part, but also presented us with an enormous challenge. I also thank him for the to-do list that he presented here of things to do for the United Nations system and for us as Member States. I hope that we will all bring it back home with us and start to implement it.

We welcome the focus on participation in this year's debate and wish to thank Bolivia for putting emphasis on political inclusion and economic recovery. We also thank Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah, General Director of the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling; Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women; and the Secretary-General for their valuable input.

Participation is not about counting heads, but about having influence; about being recognized as a party to peace; about making sure that women's and men's situations are taken into consideration when making plans for the economy, for the infrastructure and for the justice system.

That is evident in the Sahel, where decreasing livelihood opportunities are directly linked to the risk of conflict and women play a role as agents of change. I had the pleasure of visiting the region this summer with colleagues from the United Nations and the African Union. In the Lake Chad region, where people are facing a food and nutrition crisis, we heard about how the shrinking lake and growing insecurity have had severe consequences for people who traditionally have sustained themselves by fishing activities. The fisherwomen whom we met in the village of Bol told us that they wished for only three things: bigger boats, better nets and not to get raped. Many of the women and girls whom we met had suffered from violence and inequality, and are now seeking to use their experiences to transform societies and structures. We were encouraged to see that women were coming together in networks to address the challenges they faced, including sexual and reproductive health and rights and access to basic social services.

The roles women have played and continue to play in Colombia and the Sahel demonstrate the very apparent need for including women in all aspects of decision-making and how that, in turn, leads to more sustainable peace. That is why we, as a member of the Council, have consistently asked: Where are the women? We will only ever be effective if we translate the women and peace and security agenda into concrete action and tailor responses to the specific situations on our agenda.

That has yielded results. All political and peacekeeping missions now have a women, peace and security mandate. Discussions in the Council are better informed, mandates are more precise, decisions are more inclusive and the number of civil society organization briefers has increased considerably, leading to better input. In July, for the first time — but, we hope, not the last — there was gender parity among briefers to the Council. However, agreements in the Security Council or advancements in our work do not automatically translate into changed realities on the ground. There needs to be a shift in mentality, a shift in analysis and a shift in action.

First of all, making tangible progress requires ownership and accountability at the highest levels of leadership in the United Nations system, as well as among us Member States. In the United Nations, Special Representatives and Special Envoys should be measured on how they implement and deliver on women, peace and security.

Secondly, the agenda must be taken seriously in the field. Senior gender expertise in political and peacekeeping missions should be strategically positioned.

Thirdly, a gender dimension must always be taken into account throughout strategic planning processes in conflict situations and never become an add-on or an afterthought. Such approaches must permeate all sectors, be they military, police or civilian.

Fourthly, missions must also step up efforts to engage with civil society, not least women's organizations.

Fifthly, we need better analysis. Conflict analysis that informs decision-making must include gender equality. Much work remains to do to make women's and men's situations visible in each setting. Gender disaggregated data in reporting from the field should be a minimum, including in the reports to the Council.

Lastly, peacekeeping and political mission budgets must be gender responsive. We have shared more detailed recommendations on all of these aspects with the Secretary-General.

We still witness too many peace processes in which the absence of women is apparent. That should no longer be accepted. I would like to dispel, once and for all, four myths on gender in peace mediation.

The first myth is that there are distinct women's issues. While conflict affects women and men differently, that does not mean that certain topics are only relevant to only one gender.

The second myth is that peace processes starts at the negotiating table. Women are usually invited when formal talks are already convened, long after pre-negotiations, consultations and agenda-setting have already started. In the earlier phases, a broad range of perspectives about the drivers of conflict and peace are urgently needed.

The third myth is that mediation is political magic in smoky rooms — or, as somebody has said, men in fancy hotels. Mediation is not some political game played by charismatic, mysterious personalities. Such

a narrow view of mediation risks closing the door to many skilful women. A group of people who challenge that myth is in the audience today — the representatives from five regional women mediator's networks. They bring incredible experience as negotiators, mediators, political decision-makers, civil society leaders and experts, and must be recognized and drawn upon by the United Nations and its Member States.

The fourth myth is that we need more evidence. Women frequently need to justify their participation by presenting evidence of the benefits of women's participation. Male counterparts never have to do that. Women should be able to participate simply because it is their right to do so. I believe that the inclusion of women mediators from all around the world will change the dynamics of peace processes.

No woman needs to be given a voice; everyone has a voice. What is needed is more listening. Sweden had the pleasure of hosting the first Multi-stakeholder Forum on Women, Peace and Security earlier this week, at which Security Council members had the opportunity to listen to more than 50 civil society representatives. Among the many themes that were raised, representatives of civil society stressed the need for addressing root causes, investing in the protection of human rights defenders and addressing gender equality within economic recovery efforts. They also called on the Security Council to act as a role model and an influencer within the system.

Empowering women and increasing women's political participation is one of the most effective tools for advancing global peace and security. It is also a prerequisite for preventing sexual and gender-based violence, which, sadly, still affects an appalling number of women every day. We salute the heroic efforts of Nadia Murad and Denis Mukwege, the winners of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize, who treat, speak up for and seek justice for women who fall victim to such violence. Their work, as well as the work of thousands of activists, peacebuilders and women human rights defenders around the world should be an inspiration to us all.

In conclusion, let me pose a challenge to all present ahead of 2020. In two years' time, resolution 1325 (2000) will turn 20. By then, we need to ensure that the commitments we have made matter. Let us collectively pledge — politically and financially — to ensure that the agenda becomes a priority and a reality.

Mrs. Brandt (Netherlands): First of all, I wish to sincerely thank the briefers for their insight and urgent advice — the "to-do list", as Minister Wallström called it.

I would also like to state that the Kingdom of the Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

If we want to build lasting peace and security, we need women. It is as simple as that and makes perfect sense. All of us present here support that. After all, it was the Security Council that unanimously adopted resolution 1325 (2000), 18 years ago. Subsequently, several more resolutions were adopted, further strengthening our commitment to women and peace and security. We did that because it makes perfect sense; because we know that, when women are involved, there is a better chance for lasting peace; because we know that inclusive peace is lasting peace.

If we know all of that and if the rationale is so clear, why is it that women are still excluded from peace processes? Why is it that women still make up only 8 per cent of negotiators — a percentage that has hardly moved in recent years? The statistics were clearly pointed out today by the Executive Director of UN-Women. Is it because, although we know, we still have not been able to sufficiently change our mindset, to change the way we think about leadership, roles and power? Have we therefore not acted with the urgency that is needed?

We see the same in the world of business. Research has shown that diverse boards with men and women at the top perform better and actually make profits go up. We therefore know there is a clear business case, but we hardly see the needle moving. We see the rationale but we do not act on it, because we have not changed who we see as leaders and whose experience and judgment we value most. The same applies to involving women in peace and security. In our eagerness to stop violence, we first make place at the table for those who picked up arms, largely men. Women, whom we know are crucial for peaceful solutions, are left out or relegated to a second or third track, despite what we know.

That is why we are happy that the focus of this debate is not on why but on how we move from knowing to truly believing and then acting. We can act in our own organizations and countries by including women in decision-making processes and through our

national action plans. When it comes to women and peace and security, the Council has shown that, if it wants to act, it can. For example, the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan now calls for the full and effective participation of women in decision-making. For the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the Council requested an increase the number of women and ensuring their meaningful participation in all aspects of the operation. As the Secretary-General pointed out, we have now significantly increased the number of female briefers, including from civil society, and on 8 March we held a Council meeting with a two-thirds majority of women around the table for the first time.

We have begun to tackle impunity for sexual violence in conflict through the use of sanctions by including a stand-alone criterion on sexual violence in the South Sudan sanctions regime. Last Monday's Arria Formula meeting again reinforced the message that sanctions are a tool that could be used more effectively by the Council when it comes to combating sexual violence in conflict. There still is a lot to do to translate that into change on the ground, but I agree that we have to resist pessimism. If we really move from knowing to acting, we can make further progress together. Let me ask for attention to two areas in which we need to act now.

The first is that we need to stand up firmly against violence inflicted upon women leaders, because it is precisely those women active in providing support and contributing to peace processes who are targeted by those who have no interest in peace. Just think of the 83 women human rights defenders who have been killed since the signing of the peace agreement in Colombia, or think of the brave women who worked in Nigeria and were murdered for saving other women's lives. We must stand up for them and act. The Council has a critical role to play in preventing and responding to such horrific violence.

The second area is that we need to get better at learning from what works. As Minister Wallström just pointed out, the 2016 comprehensive peace agreement in Colombia has set an international example for women's involvement. Civil society played a big role by demanding an inclusive peace process, and so we saw much higher percentages of women in the two negotiating teams and women contributing to the peace process at all levels. We must learn from that and make that a reality in other parts of the world as well by appointing female mediators and including women at the negotiation table in places such as Syria and Yemen.

Women candidates are available. Women are more than ready to play their part. We should make sure that they can. I think that we have run out of excuses. We know, so we now need to act. Let us make women participate. Let us protect those that do. Let us listen to them and empower them. Women are ready, so surely we should be as well. Together we can make inclusive peace a reality.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): We thank you, Mr. President, and your delegation for choosing this important topic for an open debate today. We also thank the two Ministers for joining us. I found their briefings very powerful and it is excellent that they have given up time to be with us today. Minister Wallström is a very frequent visitor to the Security Council, which is extremely welcome, and I think that all I can say is that I wholly endorse what both of those Ministers have said in the Council today. We thank them very much for that. This is a very important opportunity. We thank the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women and Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah.

I would like to digress briefly, if I may, to repeat what I said on 17 October about the content of briefings to the Council (see S/PV.8373), but we do believe that civil society's contribution is essential. I want to add our voice to those congratulating the Nobel Peace Prize winners. I think that in this year it is a very important signal of the criticality of their work, not just for the communities that benefit from it and are protected by it, but what it says overall about the international community's priorities when it comes to putting the issue of women and girls, and women and peace and security, at the centre of policymaking.

Two years ahead of the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), we are very pleased to have this important moment to reflect on progress and consider what more can be done. It is not just a moral issue, the issue of women's political and economic empowerment. Fundamentally, it is an economic issue. Countries that enable equal opportunities for all of their people, equal access to the law and services and equal participation in the economic life of the country are much more likely to thrive and prosper than countries that do not. Fundamentally, enabling half of a country's population to participate fully is much more likely to improve inclusive growth and sustainability. I think that is a

very important economic point that we all need to bear in mind.

Successive Council resolutions have, of course, argued that the greater political and economic empowerment of women is a key element of conflict prevention. And I think that is all part of the Secretary-General's core agenda. He spoke very powerfully today. We welcome his leadership and that of the Secretariat and we look forward to working more with them. When women meaningfully participate in peace processes, the resulting agreement is 35 per cent more likely to last at least 15 years. It would be more inclusive and therefore better serve the community that it represents. I would like to echo what the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden said about the importance of participation being a right and not a bonus.

As conflicts around the world become more complex and formal peace processes risk stalling, women's efforts to tackle conflict have never been more needed or more vital. In that regard, we as the United Kingdom were pleased to bring members of the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth network to New York this week to exchange experiences with other regional networks of women mediators and to explore ways to collectively drive the agenda forward. I think such mediation networks, whatever their affiliation and wherever they originate, are an important resource for us all. The Executive Director was able to describe some of the very important work on the ground. I am sure that they would be delighted to work even more closely with the United Nations.

Sustainable Development Goal 5 makes clear that empowering women is not only about community-based actions. It also requires addressing systemic challenges and structural issues and getting to the core of the barriers to women's full and equal participation and exercise of basic rights. In line with that, the United Kingdom has a cross-Government national action plan committed to increasing women's participation in decision-making and to scaling up initiatives to prevent and to respond to gender-based violence. I commend such plans to all those countries that do not have them. We also commend signing up to the United Nations voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, which the Secretary-General also mentioned today.

We often hear about the importance of mainstreaming gender equality in all policies. As an example of that, the United Kingdom has opened all military roles to women and we are close to meeting our target of women making up 15 per cent of our armed forces. That is not enough but we believe that it is a good start.

Representatives may not know that today there is a British aircraft carrier lying just off Staten Island. It is on a friendly visit to New York. I want to stress the word "friendly". However, what I also want to stress is that 13 per cent of that ship's company are women. Eighty-three of the 650 personnel on board are women. It is the highest number within our Royal Navy fleet. As I said, that is not enough but it is a good start, and we hope very much to build on that.

I would like to talk a little about education, which is key to achieving our ambition. That means educating women, men, boys and girls if we want to change attitudes and behaviours. We have a Leave No Girl Behind campaign. It has the goal of empowering women and girls through quality education, including education in emergencies. I would like to stress the word "quality". A great deal of excellent work has been done around the world in getting girls into school. I previously had the honour to be the British Ambassador to Afghanistan. I saw the girls there going to school and the difference that it made to their lives. The next challenge is to make that a genuine quality education so that they obtain the skills and the tools necessary to be able to play a full role in the political and economic life of their country as they grow up. Also, as part of that campaign, we endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration. We believe that that represents an important step forward.

We have also talked about sexual and gender-based violence. By definition, that prevents women from being active participants at school, in the workforce and in other political and economic areas. I want to endorse what the Minister of the Netherlands said in particular about speaking out against violence against women leaders because they are the people who at the moment will drive that forward, and we support her in that.

Finally, as we collectively look towards 2020, the ambition for all of us should only continue to grow. I want to clearly echo what the Ministers and other representatives said about the need to translate our plans into concrete implementation. I think that that is very important. I hope that we will be able to continue to address such issues in the Security Council. I would like to conclude by referring to Minister Wallström's

quote from the women whom she met about wanting bigger boats, bigger nets and not to get raped. There is a wealth of meaning and description in that very simple sentence. If we do nothing else, we ought to be able to provide them with better equipment, better safety and the personal security that they require.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): I commend the Bolivian presidency for having convened this debate on sustaining peace through women's political and economic empowerment. I express warm appreciation to the Secretary-General, António Guterres, for his astute recommendations, as well as to Under-Secretary-General Mlambo-Ngcuka and UN-Women for their leadership and groundbreaking work. We would particularly like to thank the women Ministers of Sweden and the Netherlands, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom and civil society representative Randa Atallah for their moving and insightful statements and updates. We also welcome and appreciate the presence of civil society colleagues in the Chamber.

I take this opportunity to join the Bolivian presidency in congratulating most sincerely our Ethiopian sisters and brothers on electing the famous diplomat Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde as President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. It is very symbolic that the country has elected its first female President today, when on this global platform we are discussing the empowerment of women and its role in peace and security. As a member observer of the African Union, we support and associate ourselves with the statement of Côte d'Ivoire to be delivered today on behalf of the African troika.

We join other speakers in calling for an increased use of the women and peace and security agenda as an important tool for conflict prevention and resolution and for transformative change across the three pillars of the United Nations. There is a need to bridge the gap between words and deeds so as to effectively implement the robust women and peace and security agenda and to decisively mobilize the newly established United Nations mechanisms, such as the Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. Equally critical are the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network and the Peacebuilding Commission's gender strategy, which serve as platforms for sharing best practices and lessons learned.

Furthermore, we must support the Secretary-General's reforms focused on placing gender at the centre of conflict prevention and resolution efforts. Gender parity must feature at the highest levels across the United Nations and across his peace and security architecture reform. Efficiency should be enhanced through increased collaboration between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UN-Women in the field and at Headquarters. We must support the United Nations initiative to double the number of women in military and police contingents by 2020. It is critical to build capacity among women through South-South, North-South and triangular cooperation and to empower them to be engaged in early warning, mediation, peace negotiations, peace agreements and confidence-building measures.

True progress on women's empowerment across the globe requires a complete social transformation, involving the State, communities, the judiciary and educational systems. It is evident that the lack of access to quality and inclusive education, especially in rural areas, is the main obstacle to achieving women's empowerment. We welcome the intention of the European Union to launch a pilot project worth €2 million to conduct educational programmes for Afghan women, in line with Afghanistan's National Priority Programmes, at institutions of higher education in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. We encourage other donor countries to allocate a greater number of scholarships for women and girls from conflict-affected countries.

Efforts also must be made to strengthen women's economic security and to improve their access to markets, bilateral trade diplomacy and exchange programmes. We therefore need public-private partnerships to enhance entrepreneurship and access to technology. We call on all stakeholders to promote women's economic empowerment in cooperation with the private sector, to provide access to regional and global markets and to ensure their inclusion in the supply chains of multinational enterprises.

It is clear that the women and peace and security agenda needs adequate and sustainable financing, especially in countries affected by conflict, in order to fully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Secretary-General's new agenda for peace and to ensure that United Nations peacekeeping missions have sufficient gender expertise, authority and capacity. The funding gap in the United Nations system should be bridged through more streamlined

and better-coordinated strategies, in collaboration with other partners.

In addition, grass-roots communities, religious leaders and civil society must be encouraged to improve women's access to a country's political and religious leadership and to participation in peace processes. Member States, in turn, must be encouraged to engage with civil society organizations, including women's and youth groups, and work towards enhanced data collection with upgraded timely gender analyses and desegregated data to monitor commitments.

The women and peace and security global agenda will be effective only when each Member State and region enacts national legislation, in accordance with international norms, with the right policies and legal and institutional environment to foster gender equality.

Kazakhstan is working to achieve the highest world standards in gender policy and to strengthen the role of women in the sociopolitical life of the country. Our country integrates all four pillars of the women and peace and security agenda in its national legislation by formulating new strong pro-women policies to achieve gender parity in decision-making at all levels. For instance, women currently occupy 50 per cent of the positions in the Foreign Ministry and other public institutions in my country. We also provide training on gender equality for our armed and security forces and in connection with women's deployment to the United Nations peacekeeping operations.

National efforts must be reinforced by commitments at the regional level and strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations. In that context, we commend regional structures for implementing the women and peace and security agenda in their respective regions. A fine example is the African Union, with its progressive gender mainstreaming within the African Peace and Security Architecture, as well as the efforts of the African Women Leaders Network, which was launched last year.

On its part, Kazakhstan is focusing at the regional level on Afghanistan with a multidimensional approach to conflict prevention and resolution, recovery, reintegration and humanitarian assistance. My country, in cooperation with Japan and the United Nations Development Programme, has been implementing a project for gender equality in Afghanistan, including providing policy support and capacity development. We are also financing a $50 million programme to educate Afghan youth in our universities. In addition, last September, in cooperation with the European Union, Kazakhstan organized in Astana a regional conference on empowering women in Afghanistan.

To conclude, Kazakhstan pledges its unfailing support to the women and peace and security agenda and reaffirms that women can be powerful participants in any realm — from the corner store to activists, and from the seats of Parliament to the peace table.

Mr. Adom (Côte D'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation commends the Bolivian presidency for organizing this debate on the role of women in the promotion of peace and security. I would also like to thank Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah for their very informative briefings, which reinforced our conviction that it is essential to step up our support for women's contributions to conflict prevention and resolution.

In that regard, I welcome the leadership of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, whose report (S/2018/900) provides an encouraging assessment of the efforts undertaken to date by the international community and, at the same time, calls for continued efforts to place women at the centre of strategies to restore peace and stability.

The statement I am making now on behalf of the three African countries that are members of the Security Council — Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia and Equatorial Guinea — is intended to showcase our common commitment to promoting the role of women in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and economic development, in the light of the strategic priorities identified by the African Union.

At this stage, allow me to express heartfelt and respectful congratulations to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the people of Ethiopia, who have just elected a women to the presidency, our colleague and friend Her Excellency Ambassador Sahle-Work Zewde, and a Government that is characterized by perfect parity between men and women. That is an example to follow. It is also testimony that women's leadership is becoming increasingly necessary and decisive in the harmonious conduct of world affairs. And as Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, said, it is important to ensure that gender equality in politics is respected. Allow me also to recognize President Paul

Kagame, President of Rwanda, and his Government for spearheading efforts to that end.

The briefing delivered by the Executive Director of UN-Women provided an overview of the status of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), 18 years after its adoption by the Security Council. That resolution carries a fundamental message that is more relevant than ever, namely, that the participatory role of women is crucial and even decisive in peace processes and policies to strengthen the security of our States.

Today there is general consensus that restoring sustainable peace and stability in a post-crisis context, for example, requires the active participation of women in the political processes of crisis resolution and peacebuilding. The recognition of that fundamental requirement, enshrined in resolution 1325 (2000), as well as in the subsequent resolutions 1889 (2009), 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015), underlines women's leadership in conflict prevention and peacebuilding by sufficiently showing the international community's resolute commitment to translate that into concrete action.

As an institution that speaks on behalf of a continent where challenges persist with regard to the inclusion of women in peace processes, the African Union fully subscribes to that commitment. To that end, our common efforts must converge towards the implementation of those multilateral commitments, by further opening up political spaces and peace processes to women and by strengthening their role as actors in economic and social development.

This debate provides us with an opportunity to deliver two messages.

First, we affirm the African Union's unequivocal commitment to working to strengthen the role of women in peace and security processes. The main objective at the continental level with regard to the women and peace and security agenda is to obtain tangible results through the operationalization of the relevant provisions of resolution 1325 (2000) contained in the national action plans. Promoting gender equality in the executive and legislative systems and strengthening of the role of women in mediation and prevention strategies were identified as priorities, which must now be diligently implemented in close collaboration with the United Nations and other bilateral partners, including FemWise-Africa and the African Women Leaders Network.

Those platforms ensure, it should be stressed, the effective implementation of commitments made to include women in the restoration of peace, stability and sustainable development. In addition to those platforms, in March, the African Union adopted the Continental Results Framework for Monitoring and Reporting on the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa, which enables the collection of quantitative and qualitative data on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The Continental Framework promotes the development and refinement of evidence-based policies that reflect the reality of women on the ground.

Secondly, we are deeply convinced that the quest for peace and security in Africa is inextricably linked to the unwavering struggle against unacceptable acts of violence suffered by women that constrain their economic empowerment. In that regard, I recall the African Union's adherence to a zero-tolerance policy with regard to sexual violence linked to conflicts and peacekeeping missions. Accordingly, mediators, as well as support systems that include a gender perspective and women's participation, have been deployed in peace-enforcement missions in Somalia and Darfur. The African Union and its member States have established several programmes that integrate peacebuilding and economic empowerment initiatives for the benefit of the women of the continent.

In conclusion, I reiterate our commitment to the vision of the women and peace and security agenda, which is a top priority in Agenda 2063 of the African Union, the African Peace and Security Architecture and the African Governance Architecture. The African Union will continue to strengthen its strategic partnership with the United Nations through increased, robust cooperation between its Peace and Security Council and the Security Council in confronting the most urgent challenges together. The contribution of women to promoting peace and development, the struggle against the devastation wrought by firearms with the Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative of the African Union and financial support for African peacekeeping operations, among other things, will play a prominent role in that undertaking.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First of all, I thank the Bolivian presidency for convening today's meeting. I also thank Secretary-General Guterres and Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, for their briefings. China also

listened attentively to the statement by Ms. Siniora Atallah, the representative of civil society.

More than 60 years ago, Chairman Mao said that women hold up half the sky. China has today a population of 1.4 billion people, of whom 678. million are women. Women play a role in holding up half the sky in China's socioeconomic development. They also play an irreplaceable role in terms of peace and stability stability in the country. The theme of today's meeting is very meaningful, as it brings to mind the Chinese female peacekeepers who have demonstrated their commitment and dedication to the cause of peacekeeping. In the Mediterranean, in Sector East of the area of operation of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon Ms. Mao Ping, the first female commanding officer ever sent to a United Nations peacekeeping mission, received the Outstanding Female award from the Lebanese Government in November. The Chinese peacekeeping medical team led by her is well known in local communities and beyond for their healing hands and loving hearts. They have provided medical services to local people and poor families and are planting the seeds of friendship and peace in the land of the cedars. In South Sudan, more than 10,000 kilometres from China, there is a combat unit of 10 female fighters in the peacekeeping infantry battalion that China dispatched to that country. In addition to fulfilling their mandate, they also pass out stationery to children in the refugee camps and disseminate knowledge about the protection of women's rights and interests, bringing joy and smiles to the children.

Among the more than 2,000 Chinese peacekeepers currently serving in United Nations peacekeeping missions, more than 50 of them are women. Since China began participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations almost 30 years ago, Chinese female peacekeepers have served thousands of times. Those respectable and beloved Chinese female peacekeeping soldiers are quietly dedicating themselves to their responsibilities, while contributing to safeguarding world peace. I would like to take this opportunity to pay deep tribute to all women peacekeepers contributing to peacekeeping.

Women are an important force for maintaining international peace and security. Over a nearly 20-year period the Security Council has adopted a series of resolutions on women and peace and security, which constitutes a positive framework for protecting women's rights and interests in conflict and promoting women's increasing role in maintaining peace and security. Women are vulnerable to harm in war and conflict, and they are a vulnerable group in general. But they are increasingly becoming important participants, builders and contributors to peace processes. Women play an indispensable role in preventing conflict, maintaining peace, reconciling differences and integrating social groups. The international community should strengthen coordination and cooperation so that women can fully play their role in maintaining international peace and security. In that regard, I would like to propose the following suggestions.

First, we need to strengthen our political resolve to settle hotspot issues and create a favourable international environment for the survival and development of women. The international community should commit to a vision of peace and development and win-win cooperation, and help countries in conflict achieve peace and stability in a timely manner. Given the responsibilities conferred upon it by the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council should actively encourage the peaceful settlement of disputes through dialogue and negotiations and provide solid guarantees for the protection of women. Women should be ensured of their full participation and roles in decision-making in peace processes.

Secondly, we must resolutely counter any acts that violate women's rights in conflict and support the efforts of the countries concerned to shoulder the primary responsibility for the protection of women in conflict. Efforts should be made to stop sexual violence in armed conflict as part of a concerted effort to respond to the threat of terrorism, to adopt comprehensive measures to protect women from harm by terrorists and extremist forces, and to provide security guarantees and humanitarian assistance to women affected by conflict. The international community should fully respect the leadership role played by the country concerned in that regard and provide constructive assistance in view of its needs.

Thirdly, we must solve the problem by treating its symptoms, as well as its root causes, and promote the advancement of women together with economic and social development. The international community should actively help the countries concerned with post-conflict reconstruction, while according priority attention to the strengthening of their capacity-building, work to eradicate the root causes of conflict and ensure that all people, including women, can enjoy the benefits

of development. The international community should provide support to conflict-affected countries in the areas of gender equality and women's empowerment and work to guide women's organizations and civil society so that they can play a positive and constructive role in the peace process.

Fourthly, we must ensure that there is synergy among all the relevant United Nations bodies. The Security Council, the General Assembly, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Economic and Social Council, UN-Women and other agencies should follow their respective mandates, bring into full play their own advantages and strengthen cooperation in jointly responding to issues related to the women and peace and security agenda. The United Nations should enhance cooperation, unlock potential and improve efficiencies with regional and subregional organizations in training and fundraising in the area of women and peace and security. Recently, there has been cooperation between the Chinese Ministry of Defence and UN-Women. Together, they have jointly hosted international workshops for women peacekeeping officers to encourage troop-contributing countries to actively assign and dispatch female officers to peacekeeping missions, as well as to enhance their capabilities and skills.

When presiding over the Global Leaders Meeting on Gender Equality and Empowerment in September 2015, President Xi Jinping stated that without women's liberation and progress, the liberation and progress of humankind would not be attainable. China would like to work with the international community and continue to push for the realization of the goals of the agenda on women and peace and security. It wishes to pursue its unrelenting efforts towards the advancement of women worldwide in order to jointly build a community — a shared future — for humankind and create a better world for women and for all.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Sweden and the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. I would like to thank your delegation, Mr. President, for convening this open debate and discussing this important topic. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2018/900) and for his valuable briefing. I would like further to thank Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, and Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah for their informative briefings.

The Security Council has without a doubt succeeded in highlighting the centrality of the role of women in achieving international peace and security in its various stages, from conflict prevention to the settlement of conflicts. The United Nations and all its organs have sought to empower women politically, socially and economically, and to ensure gender parity. That is best exemplified in the Secretary-General's successful strategy on gender parity among higher administration staff and resident coordinators.

Through consecutive Security Council resolutions, beginning with resolution 1325 (2000), a solid framework of standards has been established to strengthen the role of women in maintaining peace and security. Now we have to bridge the resolutions gap to make them a reality and ensure that the participation of women is neither secondary nor symbolic for the purpose of filling quotas.

According to the latest statistics for the period from 1990 to 2017, women represented 2 per cent of mediators and 8 per cent of negotiators. If we are to achieve positive peace, as the Secretary-General has called it, which is a more comprehensive concept of peace that is not limited to stopping violence, but also includes accountability and full enjoyment of human rights, we must intensify our efforts aimed at the useful participation of women in mediation and negotiation processes so that our resolutions will not be useless. That begins with ensuring the political, social and economic rights of women, empowering them to secure an education and basic services, as well as empowering them economically. Communities where there is gender parity are more stable and resilient against disorders and disputes.

In addition, we must address obstacles that hinder the participation of women in the achievement of lasting peace, particularly violence against women in political life; high poverty rates and food insecurity; low political participation of women in the stages of peace; and the denial of their rights in general. When conflicts break out, women should participate in the political processes that take place prior to peace consultations, as well as in the consultations themselves. Women should be empowered to participate in the implementation of peace agreements through specific and tangible procedures and mechanisms. Experience has proven

that the participation of women in peace processes is directly linked to achieving improvement in the outcome of those processes and to the implementation of peace agreements. The participation of women would also lead to longer-term agreements, whereby communities become more stable and less liable to fall back into conflict.

The best example of the effective participation of women in the peace processes is Colombia. Colombian women have attained high positions in transitional justice in their country. We encourage Colombian women to continue participating in the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace.

At the regional level, we commend the effective participation of Yemeni women in the inclusive national dialogue, which is still the key factor for the realization of the desired peace in brotherly Yemen. Yemeni women also participated in the Yemen peace talks hosted by the State of Kuwait.

In that regard, we support the Secretary-General's efforts to improve gender parity in United Nations peace operations. It is important to provide training and capacity-building to all participants, military and civilian, in issues pertaining to women, including sexual violence in conflicts.

We understand that troop-contributing countries and police-contributing countries, as well as host countries, are mainly involved in realizing the effective participation of women in peace processes. We encourage the strengthening of cooperation with those States, as well as building their national capacities to ensure that the participation of women is of real measurable value.

In conclusion, we reaffirm that women have the inherent right to participate in issues of peace and security. We support the United Nations efforts to empower women, in cooperation with Member States, to effectively participate for achieving lasting peace.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the initiative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia in convening this timely open debate. Peru is committed to the women and peace and security agenda. Together with Sweden, we have the honour of chairing the group of experts that promotes that agenda in the Council. As such, we fully support the statements of Minister Wallström of Sweden and Minister Brandt of the Netherlands, who today honour us with their presence. We would also like to commend the important briefings of the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women and, on behalf of women's organizations, Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah.

Peru emphasizes the importance of women's participation and leadership in the maintenance of international peace and security and, in relation to that, the primary responsibility of national States in promoting their political and economic empowerment. Since 2000, the Council has adopted eight resolutions that have served to set an agenda and develop good practices in that area. Nevertheless, barriers and challenges persist, forcing us to redouble our efforts as we approach the commemoration in 2020 of the twentieth anniversary of the historic resolution 1325 (2000).

The evidence shows that when women participate more at every level of political life, societies are less inclined to conflict and more inclined to maintain and consolidate peace. Women bring perspectives on future and unity that are essential to building and sustaining peace. In that regard, we emphasize that gender equality and women's economic and political empowerment contribute to reducing their particular vulnerabilities during conflict and in general to preventing violence and advancing human resilience, as well as achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. An investment in women's empowerment is an investment in peace and development as well as in protecting and promoting their human rights. That is why we want to highlight and support the Secretary-General's vision and the priority he gives to developing and implementing this agenda, based on the concept of sustainable peace. With regard to the role of women in the maintenance of international peace and security, we underscore the Secretary-General's views on the need to promote their participation and leadership in every peace effort, starting with active collaboration with women's civil-society organizations. In that regard, we wan to emphasize the importance of contributing to financing the women's organizations that have been asked to participate in the peace processes launched by the Council.

We also underscore the importance of incorporating gender perspectives into peace operations mandated by the Council. In our view it is crucial to train Blue Helmets in promoting and protecting women's and children's human rights. In that regard, and in view

of the provisions of resolution 1820 (2008), Peru has been gradually increasing women's participation in the armed forces we send to United Nations peacekeeping operations, and we have already surpassed the minimum 15 per cent required in the resolution.

Still with regard to the agenda on women and peace and security, our Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations has created a displaced persons registry that enables us to quickly recognize and address issues relating to the rights of women and girls who were affected during the years in which Peru was battling terrorism. Our Government has also committed to implementing policies aimed at empowering women in the political and economic life of the country, with a decentralized approach that includes the need to guarantee the election of women to positions of authority.

I would like to conclude by citing in this debate the voice of Flora Tristán, a Peruvian citizen who was one of the great nineteenth-century pioneers in the vindication of the rights of women:

> "All of the world's misfortunes stem from the oblivion and contempt in which the natural and essential rights of being a woman have been held until now".

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank you for organizing today's meeting, Mr. President, as well as the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UN-Women, for their participation in our discussion. Our thanks also go to to Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah for her participation.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2018/900) presents a fairly complete and objective picture of the state of affairs in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), as well as subsequent resolutions aimed at protecting women in armed conflict, enhancing their role in peace processes and unlocking their potential. If I may, I would like to note that as part of its consideration of the agenda item on women and peace and security, the Security Council should focus specifically on issues directly related to establishing and maintaining international peace and security. In our view, attempts to exploit these issues — in order to advance the cause in the Council of human rights and gender issues traditionally covered by other bodies of our Organization such as the General Assembly, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council and the Commission on the Status of Women — are damaging and unfounded. Such tactics lead to pointless duplication of effort and an imbalance in our system's overall coordination, and ultimately create obstacles to the effective implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

The Russian Federation consistently supports all measures aimed at increasing the influence of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as women's active participation in peace negotiations and electoral processes. The key document in the context of post-conflict restoration is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which, together with the Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security, establishes the essential legal and political basis for effective cooperation. At the same time, the classic negotiating process, founded on the goals and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, with its effectiveness confirmed and in demand among Member States, has in no way lost its relevance. Our task is to create the conditions for the full inclusion of women in every possible aspect of that process.

Considering the importance of this topic, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for his proposals for organizing the work of the departments of the Secretariat in preparation for the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). While a comprehensive review of actions for implementing the women and peace and security agenda in the upcoming period will be extremely helpful, it will be important to focus on evaluating the effectiveness of the performance of the relevant areas of the Secretariat while sticking strictly to the principle of the division of labour. In that regard, we expect to see information on the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Secretariat's gender parity programme, and an expansion of the number of specialist advisers in peacekeeping missions and other United Nations country offices. We hope that in the framework of the forthcoming review, proposals and assessments from Member States, including those dealing with armed conflicts, will be considered from the point of view of the practical implementation of Security Council resolutions in the area.

We would like to say a few words about the practice of developing regional and national strategies and establishing national structures for implementing this issue. We firmly believe that such measures should be adopted out of objective necessity owing to the existence of an armed conflict or post-conflict settlement. Unfortunately, we cannot support a policy

of mathematically enlarging this or that bureaucratic structure in the absence of conflict, threats of infringements on the rights of women or crimes committed against them. In my opinion, today's discussion clearly demonstrates the substantial progress that has been made in creating equal opportunities for women's active participation in the maintenance of peace and security, as well as enhancing their role in decision-making. We are ready to continue constructive dialogue on the subject.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's open debate, and the Secretary-General for his briefing and strong commitment to supporting women's meaningful participation with regard to issue of peace and security. I also thank the Executive Director of UN-Women and the Ministers of the Netherlands and Sweden for their important contributions to today's discussion.

The United States is committed to exercising leadership in terms of implementing the global women and peace and security agenda. The effort requires action from Member States and the United Nations itself. Today I would like to discuss how we are working to advance women's participation in peacemaking and security issues, as well as how we are furthering women's economic empowerment. Promoting women's equal and meaningful inclusion and participation across efforts to restore security, promote democracy and good governance and support economic development are not women's issues. They are vital national security issues.

This month we celebrated one year since the United States became the first country to translate this agenda into a comprehensive national law with the passage of the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017. A cornerstone of implementation of that landmark legislation will be the development of bold new strategies on women, peace and security, anchored in the United States' national security strategy and long-standing commitment to women's empowerment. That historic milestone reaffirms the United States' long-standing belief that the meaningful participation of women is at the heart of efforts to promote security and to advance peace. Our renewed commitment to women and peace and security aims to ensure that women's voices are at the centre of efforts to secure peace.

Our legislation also provides an opportunity to renew efforts to bring women from all backgrounds to the peace table. Our experience shows that women often have the best understanding of the needs of their communities. In one example, our Government collaborated with Notre Dame's Kroc Institute to monitor the implementation of the Colombian peace accord, including its inclusivity and gender provisions. The parties to the accord used Kroc's data to guide strategic decision-making at the national and territorial levels. The United States has also identified Yemeni women experienced in conflict resolution, security and policing, and is encouraging the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen and UN-Women to expand female involvement in the peace process and conflict-resolution efforts there.

While the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/900) points to progress in the United Nations system and at the regional and national levels, there is much more work to do. Translating the women and peace and security agenda into action requires long-term commitment. At the United Nations, we continue to call for the integration of the tenets of the women and peace and security agenda across all operations, which will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our work. Through efforts like the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, we are better integrating gender analysis into the Council's discussions and decisions. The women and peace and security agenda is now in more peacekeeping mandates than ever before. However, it is only when that agenda is a priority task in mandates, as is the case with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, that we really start to see the issue treated as the priority that it is and should be.

We encourage United Nations leadership here in New York and through the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General in the field to take the lead on the women and peace and security agenda, empowering gender advisers and facilitators to support their work. It is up to leadership to drive the culture change that we need to deliver results we want to see. We know that the best ideas on the women and peace and security agenda often come from outside the Secretariat, outside the Council and outside ministries and capitals. That is why it is essential that we fight efforts to limit the space for civil society and bring outside voices in, particularly women's voices, to inform and drive our work here.

From women civil-society leaders to human rights defenders, to peace negotiators, the work women do is essential, often dangerous, and we should look to

leverage their successes. We also continue to call on and support more Governments taking leadership on this critical issue. The United States strongly supports the design and implementation of national action plans on women and peace and security worldwide. In Iraq and Afghanistan, we have supported civil-society monitoring and advocacy initiatives related to national action plans. We are also working with the African Union to strengthen its capacity to review, monitor and implement national action plans on the continent. Finally, we have provided support to develop national action plans in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

But the women and peace and security agenda is about more than peace; it is also about security. The United States believes strongly that countries with high rates of gender inequality are more likely to experience instability and deadly conflict. The meaningful participation of women at all levels of security work, including in uniform, can help counteract that worrying trend. When women serve as military members, they make the security sector more representative of the population. They help security forces understand the communities in which they operate, serve their needs and earn their trust. Women's leadership in the security sector also reinforces the importance of women's participation in every aspect of society and opens up opportunities for other women. While we support those efforts in our own armed forces, we are also working with Governments around the world to support them in bringing the skills, leadership and untapped potential of women into their security forces. That focus on the substantive inclusion of women is particularly important in United Nations peacekeeping.

Turning to women's economic empowerment, the United States is working to build communities that are more resilient to conflict. We have invested $50 million in the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative, an innovative multi-donor facility that is aimed at expanding access to finance and technical assistance for women entrepreneurs. Fourteen other Governments have already joined us since we launched this initiative at the Group of Twenty summit last year. Together we have committed more than $340 million to the fund and leveraged more than $1.6 billion from public and private sectors to support women entrepreneurs in developing countries. It has unlocked the multi-trillion-dollar investment opportunity that women's economic participation truly represents.

Empowering women economically starts with ensuring that girls have access to education. That is a complicated issue, but I want to highlight one particular area: the attacks on schools and their misuse in armed conflict. Girls suffer most when there are attacks on schools or when combatants misuse schools to support combat operations. Even when the fighting ends, parents are particularly wary of sending their daughters to school where there is a risk of violence. Girls are also less likely to return to education once conflict has interrupted schooling. Terrorists, with their disregard for the welfare of civilians, are among the worst abusers, as we have seen with Hamas, among others. That is why the United States strongly supported language in this year's renewal of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy condemning the use of civilians to shield military objectives from attack, including when terrorists are using schools or other civilian facilities to advance their violent aims.

If we hope to prevent conflicts and build lasting peace, promote better governance and advance sustainable economic growth, we must empower women as full and equal partners at every step. Women are half the population. It is only right that they be full participants in the discussions and decisions that shape our present and those that will shape our futures.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like to thank the Bolivian presidency for having organized this open debate on the women and peace and security agenda, which, as everyone knows, is one of France's top priorities. I also thank the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UN-Women for their briefings, their commitment and their concrete recommendations, which should guide the Council. Finally, I wish to thank Ms. Randa Siniora for her powerful statement, which eloquently demonstrates the extent to which economic and social hardship and violence against women are both strong and unacceptable barriers to women's participation in political and economic decision-making processes.

I welcome the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Nadia Murad and Dr. Mukwege and, through them, to all those who work courageously to promote the rights of women, sometimes at the risk of their lives. Their commitment must inspire the Council and encourage it to accelerate the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, 18 years after its inclusion on our agenda. That is a top priority for France.

In that context, it is imperative that sexual violence be brought to an end. We are at a time when — let us face facts — sexual violence is used more than ever as a weapon of war and terrorism tactic. That is why, during an Arria Formula meeting last Monday together with the Netherlands, Côte d'Ivoire and Peru, we continued our process of reflection on ways to promote the use of individual sanctions as a tool for deterring sexual violence, and we will translate that process into sanctions. As all here know, France has supported the inclusion of a specific criterion on sexual violence in the sanctions regime concerning the Central African Republic and the inclusion of gender-related issues in the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, which in many respects is a model to follow. Our mobilization is also essential to bridge the yawning gap that separates us from women's full participation in peace processes.

I will first make several observations, which in our opinion are reasons for us to become actively engaged, before proposing several courses of action in the context of the anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) in 2020. Indeed, this anniversary is an opportunity that we must take together to give a new and strong impetus to the women and peace and security agenda. Let us not miss this opportunity.

First, I would like to make some observations. Women's participation and equality between women and men is not only a moral and political imperative, but also a key conflict-prevention instrument that has proved effective and is a factor for lasting peace. Everyone should know that when there is real equality between women and men, the risk of conflict is lower. Everyone should know that when women participate in political processes, such processes are more sustainable. And how could peacekeeping operations effectively protect the entire civilian population without women being engaged as agents of peace and security at all levels, in all pillars — military, civilian, political and economic?

Enabling women to be agents of peace and security also means guaranteeing their economic, social and cultural rights. Yet their frequent lack of access to education, property, employment, appropriate financial structures and health services makes women more vulnerable to the consequences of conflicts, of which they are most often the primary victims.

Last year, the number of peace agreements incorporating gender-related provisions decreased. Moreover, women are still far too often excluded from discussions at any stage of the negotiation process or confined to discussions that perpetuate stereotypes about their role in society. It is also sadly indicative to note, as the Secretary-General so aptly pointed out this morning, that over the past 25 years only 2 per cent of mediators and 8 per cent of negotiators have been women. I would like in that regard to commend the efforts of the Secretary-General and his team to achieve parity among his Special Representatives. He can, of course, count on our full and complete support.

In that context, I would like to reiterate, on behalf of France, our call to action. We know that the Security Council has begun to take stock of these issues. But let us be realistic: it has not been not enough. We can and must do more and better. Together we must make a real qualitative leap; this is within our reach. I would like in particular to welcome the commitment and concrete recommendations of the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs in this regard.

The Council now includes provisions on women's rights and participation in more than 70 per cent of its resolutions and nearly 90 per cent of its presidential statements. We must reach 100 per cent. Let us therefore set ourselves this target of 100 per cent. In the same spirit, it is important that the Council adopt specific press statements as part of the women and peace and security agenda. Similarly, we must continue to systematically invite civil-society leaders, especially women, to give us an accurate picture of the reality on the ground.

Security Council field visits must also give full consideration to meetings with women and to the challenges that specifically concern them. This was the case with a meeting we held in the Democratic Republic of the Congo recently, which to me was one of the most striking and inspiring during our recent mission to the country, and I think that in saying so I also speak for the vast majority of my colleagues. The same must apply to the highest United Nations representatives in crisis situations. I would like to welcome in this regard the joint initiative of the Executive Director of UN-Women and the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations to travel together to South Sudan.

But we can all see that we must go further. The anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) in 2020 provides

us with a unique opportunity that we must take together. Follow-up of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda must be more robust, and the 76 action plans and 11 regional frameworks established within that framework must be monitored more closely so as to better identify problems and promote good practices. We are ready to work with all our partners to define the outlines of a mechanism that would effectively review these national and regional processes, as the Secretary-General states in his report (S/2018/900). Our actions must be consonant with our goals. We must develop the regional dimension, and we welcome the ownership of the agenda by regional and subregional organizations. This is a fundamental point if we really want to be effective in the long term.

Finally, the United Nations needs to raise the profile of women's participation in peace processes, just as it did for the demobilization of child soldiers. We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UN-Women in this area, and we are at their disposal to continue the process of reflection together.

France will remain fully committed to women's rights, both within the Security Council and in all other relevant bodies. The President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron, has made equality between women and men the great cause of his five-year term and a top priority of the French Group of Seven presidency next year. The women and peace and security agenda will be an important element of this priority. France is currently developing its third national plan of action for the women and peace and security agenda, which will be presented in the first quarter of 2019, and France will once again make that agenda a priority of its presidency of the Security Council in March 2019.

As part of its second national plan of action, France has provided direct support in several areas of conflict. In Syria, for instance, France funded an initiative to provide emergency medical assistance to protect women in a conflict where they are too often targeted, in particular through assistance in terms of sexual and reproductive health or psychological support services designed to improve the living conditions of women, especially those giving birth in very difficult conditions. In Libya, France has supported training workshops for young entrepreneurs in Misrata, 50 per cent of whom were women, with the aim of strengthening the Libyan economic fabric by assisting young Libyan entrepreneurs and start-ups.

Our third national plan of action will resolutely pursue France's commitments in the framework of the inclusion of women in peace processes and State reconstruction. The close involvement of civil society in the elaboration of the plan, its concrete implementation in France and abroad and the assessment of its results is, of course, vital. The challenge of the women and peace and security agenda, in addition to its implementation, lies in ensuring that genuine ownership is taken at all levels of society by the actors involved in issues of peacekeeping and the rebuilding of peace and security.

In conclusion, I would like to say that France's deep conviction is that, at a time when multilateralism is being criticized and put to the test, women have a key role to play in giving new impetus to multilateralism, in which France believes more strongly than ever. Parity and diversity are at the heart of the DNA of the United Nations and must therefore be at the heart of our actions.

Simone de Beauvoir wrote that "the present is not a potential past; it is the moment of choice and action". So, dear friends, let us get to work.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to commend Bolivia for having convened today's important debate.

Poland aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his valuable remarks. I also thank the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, for her briefing. We are also pleased to see Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah with us in the Chamber today; the voice of civil society is important for us to hear. We are also honoured by the presence of ministers from Sweden and the Netherlands.

The need to include women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution has been gradually acknowledged in the international peacebuilding arena. The women and peace and security agenda has been greatly enriched, including by highlighting the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the great benefits of enhancing the involvement of women in peace processes, and the absolute necessity of tackling the question of sexual violence as a tactic of war. It is also widely understood that women and men have different experiences both during and after conflict and that women have a unique set of challenges related to peacebuilding and security.

There is no doubt that in spite of the achievements registered, much remains to be done. There has been a marginal increase in the number of women involved in formal peace talks, and, consequently, women's concerns are rarely on the agenda of peace talks. A major challenge is that women are often perceived as not having the skills, knowledge or social status needed to bring about change in post-conflict environments. Changing this requires a shift in mindset by negotiators and mediators as to how they view the role of women.

We welcome the focus of this year's debate on political and economic empowerment. We believe there is a need for a broader discussion in the Security Council on the importance of women's empowerment in conflict and post-conflict settings. In this context, I would like to focus on the following key points: leadership, empowerment and education.

The meaningful participation of women in peace processes and broader political processes is reflected in the quality of such participation, not in the number of women who participate; it is about women's leadership. We need to identify and support policies that strengthen not only women's voices but also women's leadership in decision-making processes during peacebuilding, and also to ensure that women have a strong voice in decision-making, from the initial peacemaking process to the establishment and development of local and national governmental institutions. We know that there are women who are adequately trained for these roles, that women are available for high-level appointments and, further, that qualified women are everywhere.

One of the factors that enables women to participate more actively in society and peacebuilding processes is economic empowerment. Basic economic stability helps women live securely, have greater leverage to earn respect in their communities, and become active and contributing members of society. It gives them the courage to speak up about violence and abuse. Empowerment is about much more than acknowledging the important work that women already do. It is also about how power and resources such as land and water are distributed and who makes the decisions. Fostering and consolidating women's economic empowerment is crucial to the full participation of women in society and must therefore be a collaborative effort. It requires action to be taken within United Nations bodies and in cooperation with other international organizations and the international community and, most importantly, it requires action by local communities in post-conflict countries.

I very much agree with my predecessor that we need action. In this context, allow me to share some information about Polish development assistance and our projects. Over the past several years, Poland has been supporting women's economic recovery and empowerment in Palestine. This year we have focused on enhancing women's entrepreneurship, supporting newly established, women-run businesses and creating jobs. Polish aid has also financed the implementation of sustainable irrigation systems in home gardens in the West Bank. This new irrigation technology can save water and increase crop yields by up to 20 per cent. Larger crops will not only enhance the food security of Palestinian women and their families, but also constitute a source of additional income. This project has not only given those women a strong tool for their economic empowerment but also contributed to fostering gender quality.

Allow me to make my last point. No discussion of women's empowerment would be complete without a reference to the role that education must play in this process. Education is a catalyst for achieving equal participation in society and achieving women's integration into long-term economic recovery. It is also an important step towards removing the obstacles that impede women's full participation in political life, conflict prevention, and peace and transitional justice processes.

I am very pleased to inform the Council that Poland has just adopted its first-ever national action plan on women and peace and security. This clearly shows our comprehensive commitment to implementing the Council's resolutions on women and peace and security. The plan set four main outcomes for the period 2018-2021: the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention and peacekeeping; the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda; the protection of and support for victims of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence; and, finally, the promotion and development of the women and peace and security agenda in Poland.

If we are serious about our commitment to a more peaceful, sustainable and prosperous world, there is simply no alternative to investing in women, giving them a voice in all relevant decision-making processes and supporting their political and economic empowerment.

We need to stop seeing women as victims of war and, rather, look at them as leaders for peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

I would like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres not only for the report (S/2018/900) that he presented today but also for his commitment to the issue that has brought us here today and for his noteworthy efforts to ensure that our Organization as a whole sets an example in terms of ensuring the equitable representation of women. I should like also to thank the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, and the representative of Palestinian civil society, Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah, for their briefings.

History was written by men — men who have relegated women to a secondary status, devalued their role in society and engaged in inexcusable forms of violence against them. We are the victims of a patriarchal system, rooted in capitalism, that exacerbates inequalities and the economic, social and cultural oppression of women throughout the world. This is the fundamental problem. This is the system that social organizations, civil society, regional organizations and the international community as a whole must fight.

However, there is no doubt that it is States that bear the primary responsibility for promoting structural changes that grant women the place that historically has been denied them. It is only through gender equality and the empowerment of women that we will bring about more just, inclusive and peaceful societies.

Women face many forms of violence on a daily basis and in various situations, but none is more cruel or has such devastating consequences as the violence resulting from armed conflict — hence the importance of the historic resolution 1325 (2000), which recognizes this fact and underscores the fundamental link that exists between respect for gender equality and international peace and security. On the basis of that resolution and the seven resolutions adopted by the Council on the subject, the United Nations has undertaken many efforts and made significant progress in their implementation in order to effectivcly integrate a gender perspective in peace processes and promote the participation of women in them. Among those advances, we can mention the establishment of UN-Women, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security and others.

However, despite those efforts, the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda continues to pose important challenges, mainly in this last point: the inclusion of women in peace processes. There are four pillars that make up the normative framework created by the Security Council: prevention, participation, protection and recovery. Each is equally important and they complement each other to ensure the optimal implementation of the agenda. Today we would like to emphasize the importance of prevention and how to achieve the active participation of women in peace processes.

While there are similarities, each country has its own reality and different challenges. We have highlighted the Colombian peace process because of the mechanisms used to promote women's participation and incorporate a gender perspective in the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace; and because of the gender balance in the personnel of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, which is not seen in other peace missions.

Another historic example of women who promote peace and reconciliation in my region are the heroic Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. We also highlight progress made in parliamentary representation achieved in Somalia, the advances made in the Sahel region and Afghanistan, among others. Those are clear examples of the importance of women's political empowerment.

Other cases with many challenges include those faced by the countries of the Lake Chad basin and their fight against terrorism imposed by Boko Haram, the stigma faced by its victims, as Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed reported after her visit to that region, after which she went to the Democratic Republic of Congo, where she stressed the need to encourage women's participation in the electoral process. Other places where women face even more humanitarian complications are Yemen, Palestine and the Central African Republic, among others.

Every year we meet to highlight the importance of implementing the women and peace and security agenda, ending sexual violence in conflict, ensuring accountability and calling for the inclusion of women in peace processes. But how do we do that? First, we need empowered, free women, who are masters of

their decisions and bodies, and who are economically independent. That is how they will be true agents of change. How do we achieve that? This is where States must show leadership and promote structural changes to combat inequality, poverty and discrimination. They should focus, first and foremost, on women.

Bolivia was an unstable country. Between 2000 and 2003, social conflicts broke out against the privatization of water and in defence of national sovereignty over our hydrocarbon resource reserves. We needed a fundamental change. Therefore, one of the first measures of the current Government was to establish the Constituent Assembly, which was presided over by a woman indigenous leader. We drafted a new Constitution, which was adopted in 2009 and established the right of women and men to participate freely in the creation, exercise and control of political power, on equal footing and under equal conditions.

On that basis we focused on adopting measures to make progress in dismantling the patriarchal system and thereby breaking down structural barriers, mainly through the political and economic empowerment of women. We promoted women's participation in decision-making roles through the Electoral System Act, which establishes parity and alternation in the lists of male and female candidates for representative posts, making Bolivia the second country in the world with the highest representation of women in the Legislative Assembly. In Bolivia, women have a majority not only in Parliament, but also in the other elected bodies.

In the same vein, one of the most important measures for women's economic inclusion was the Community-based Agrarian Reform Renewal Act, which not only guarantees the participation of women in land restoration and distribution processes, but also prioritizes women's right to own land. Twelve years ago, only 10 per cent of women in Bolivia were owners of land. Today, in 2018, 45 per cent of land ownership is in the hands of women.

Bolivia has experienced 12 years of fundamental change, and without the role of women as agents of change, that transformation would not have been achieved. Today we enjoy economic, political and social stability that we did not have before. That is why we would like to reiterate our commitment to the women and peace and security agenda.

We thank the Secretary-General for the recommendations he presented today in the run-up to the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000). All States, together with the United Nations system and civil society, must work together in a coordinated fashion to achieve optimal implementation of this agenda.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the Ms. Michelle Müntefering, Minister of State in the Federal Foreign Office of Germany.

Ms. Müntefering (Germany): May I begin with a quote:

> "I would like to state here, and I believe that many agree with me on this issue, that we women do not owe a debt of gratitude in the traditional sense of the expression."

Those words were uttered by Marie Juchacz almost 100 years ago, on 19 February 1919, in the German Parliament — during the first German democracy immediately after the introduction of women's suffrage. As the first woman to speak in Germany's Parliament, she boldly continued:

> "It will not occur to us to deny our femininity because we have entered into the political arena and are joining the fight for the rights of the people. There is no part of the new governmental programme that we women are not interested in."

That is precisely the way things are today, 100 years after this speech — also and especially internationally. Foreign and security policy can and must no longer take place without women in the twenty-first century: neither in national parliaments, nor in the United Nations, nor in its international peace missions. The United Nations, as a central, rules-based, multilateral regulatory framework, was created more than 70 years ago, after two world wars. For us, women are more important than ever before — and not only with a view to our own history, but to a common and peaceful future.

That is why I wish, first of all, to offer my sincere thanks to Bolivia, the current holder of the Security Council presidency, for this open debate on resolution 1325 (2000). I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, for their important statements, as well as Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah, in her capacity as a civil society representative.

We cannot afford to talk about peace and women and security in the twenty-first century without women sitting at the table as equal partners. They must be actors and shapers of peace and security policy, and not just recipients of political decisions. We cannot afford to neglect women's potential for promoting security, stability and sustainable peace, as still remains the case today.

The adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) was a milestone, and a new generation of our countries' sons and daughters has grown up in the intervening years. A great deal has happened since that time. We may be taking small steps, but we are making progress. Therefore, it is decisive for us now to continue addressing this topic in view of the crises and conflicts in the world and to build steadily on experiences and successes and drive them forward with vim and vigour. In response to our European partners, it might not be the same procedure as before, but we will do our best.

Germany aligns itself with the statements to be delivered by the observer of the European Union and the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security. We also support the statement to be delivered by the representative of Ghana on behalf of the Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network, in which Germany serves as Vice-Chair.

Allow me, above and beyond that, to mention three of Germany's priorities with regard to women and peace and security.

First, we will place the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) at the heart of our work as a member of the Security Council during the period 2019-2020. We look forward to working closely together with Peru as we take over as Co-Chair of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security. We will build on Sweden's excellent preparatory work and raise the profile of the Group's recommendations still further. We will give civil society a voice that is heard in the Security Council, including women human rights defenders.

Secondly, we will continue to lend our full support to the important work of the United Nations to prevent and eliminate conflict-related sexual violence. We will use the annual open debate on that issue during our presidency in April 2019 to strengthen the normative framework of the Security Council with respect to conflict-related sexual violence. We look forward to working with all members of the Security Council, especially with our French friends. This year's Nobel Peace Prize laureates — Nadia Murad from Iraq, who now lives in Germany, and Dr. Denis Mukwege from the Democratic Republic of the Congo — underscore in their work how important the fight against conflict-related sexual violence continues to be.

Thirdly, and lastly, Germany intends to achieve tangible progress regarding the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) by 2020 — the twentieth anniversary of the resolution. We will continue to draw on the important and practical exchange of experiences in the focal points network. I am most delighted that we are due to hand over the presidency of that network to Namibia in 2019, especially since it is one of the driving forces behind resolution 1325 (2000). Moreover, we will continue to lend political and financial support to the African Women Leaders' Network, as well as with regard to the establishment of national chapters as soon as possible, such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We are talking here about resolution 1325 (2000), namely, the decision adopted unanimously by the Security Council in October 2000. It is important to ensure that we strengthen women at all sociopolitical levels — locally, regionally and globally. I firmly believe that women can do anything, but they must also be allowed to do so.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia.

Ms. Leskovar (Slovenia): At the outset, let me say that Slovenia fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

Let me also commend Bolivia for organizing today's debate to highlight the role of women in peace and security. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his annual report (S/2018/900) and express our appreciation for his commitment to the women and peace and security agenda.

The meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peace processes is enabled through their effective political and economic empowerment, their access to resources and the realization and exercise of their fundamental rights. Their voices in politics, including in Parliaments and Governments, in the military, in business and the

corporate world and in civil society lend credibility and sustainability to the measures that address security concerns at all levels. We concur on the need for improved data and measurements for monitoring trends and progress in the relevant areas.

Obstacles to women's political and economic participation contribute to prolonged insecurity and threaten solutions for sustainable peace. Sexual and gender-based violence continues to represent one such obstacle, and we must do more to hold perpetrators accountable. With regard to accountability, let me reiterate Slovenia's strong support for the International Criminal Court and the work done in previous years by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

I would also like to stress the need for an active role on the part of men in promoting the women and peace and security agenda, both with regard to the prevention and elimination of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence and by promoting the meaningful participation of women in peace efforts.

Let me inform the Concil oubriefly about our national efforts. Slovenia's second national action plan on women and peace and security for the period 2018-2020 will be adopted by the Government in the coming weeks. The new action plan is based on a review of the implementation of the first action plan and takes into account emerging challenges and trends. It encompasses activities in five thematic areas: the integration of a gender perspective, women's participation, the protection of women and girls and putting an end to sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, education, training and awareness-raising about women and peace and security issues, and accountability for conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. The plan includes a monitoring and reporting mechanism, and we believe that it will improve our results in terms of the women and peace and security agenda. We are also working on a new directive for the Slovenian armed forces on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

We have defined gender equality as one of our thematic priorities and a cross-cutting issue in terms of our international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, and we are supporting projects on the empowerment of women in the Western Balkans, Lebanon, Jordan, Uganda and Rwanda. Those projects contribute to women's resilience by encouraging awareness-raising, education and employment, balanced representation and the promotion of economic and psychosocial empowerment.

Given the importance that my Government attaches to the women and peace and security agenda, we have decided to dedicate part of our biggest foreign policy event — the Bled Strategic Forum, which we host every summer — to marking the fortieth anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000).

We welcome the efforts of the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security to stress coordinated and specific country-level action. We join others in encouraging the Security Council to pay due regard to the Group's work in its deliberations and outcomes.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the appeal of the Secretary-General for all of us to do more to close the gap between what we are saying in this Chamber and what we are doing outside of it in order to provide more space for women's participation and secure more resources, including financing. I assure the Council that Slovenia remains firmly committed to the women and peace and security agenda and to a comprehensive approach to its implementation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Ms. Herashchenko (Ukraine) (*spoke in Russian*): I represent Ukraine as the President's special envoy for the peaceful settlement of the situation in Donbas and as a direct participant in the Minsk peace process.

I would like to thank the presidency of Bolivia for convening this open debate and the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UN-Women for their statements.

Ukraine also endorses the statement to be made later today by the observer of the European Union.

We are pleased with the inclusion in the Secretary-General's report on today's topic (S/2018/900) of information on the measures that the Government of Ukraine is taking to implement Council resolution 1325 (2000), particularly on the start of the implementation process for our national action plan. I have to agree with the Secretary-General's observation that 2020 will

be a test of our obligations in that regard, and we must speed up our efforts to implement its main priorities.

I believe that the United Nations has a unique opportunity to fulfil one of its founding principles, which is

> "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small".

The equal participation of women, and their access to high-level Government positions and decision-making processes at every level, is vitally important to achieving gender parity. That is not only affirmed in article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, it is also reinforced in the Sustainable Development Goals. Data from the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and from the International Labour Organization only emphasizes the importance of ending the gender gap in the representation of women at every level, in political decision-making and in ensuring equal pay.

Considering that the armed aggression against Ukraine is now in its fifth year and that it is women and children who are the war's primary victims, the Government of Ukraine has launched efforts to effectively implement resolution 1325 (2000) and to guarantee and protect the rights of women in every public arena. Our national action plan for implementing the resolution for the period leading up to 2020 is proceeding successfully. It provides for the inclusion of the principle of gender parity in professional training, a policy on expanding women's participation in peacebuilding processes and a system for protecting women and girls who are victims of the conflict. One important component is preventing and combating gender-based violence during military action.

Within the framework of creating an institutional mechanism for establishing a gender policy, the Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine has already been tasked with its coordination and a position of special Government representative for gender policy issues has been established. We are currently working on broadening women's participation in Ukrainian political life. Unfortunately, women make up only 12 per cent of the Ukrainian Parliament, which is certainly not enough and does not correspond to Ukrainian women's professional potential. We are therefore working on changing our legislation and introducing gender quotas, which have already proved their worth in elections at the local level.

In September, the Government approved a national action plan to implement the recommendations outlined in the conclusions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, defining specific measures for the period leading up to 2021. Our work on a national strategy for gender equality in the security and defence sectors continues, and there are now more than 25,000 women, of whom 3,400 are officers, in contract-based military service in the Ukrainian armed forces on an equal footing with men. The number of posts to which women can be appointed has increased significantly, ensuring their equal access to military ranks. This year for the first time a woman received the rank of major-general and leads our military's medical service.

The numbers of civilian and military victims of the Russian Federation's armed aggression against Ukraine have risen every year, and I would particularly like to address the humanitarian disaster caused by the war against Ukraine. Women serving in our armed forces have been dying in Donbas since 2014. A few days ago, Olesia Baklanova, a soldier, was killed. She was just 19 years old. In February, Sabina Galitskaya, a nurse, died when her car, which was clearly marked as a medical vehicle, was hit by a Russian anti-tank missile. She was 23. How many more Ukrainian women will have to die defending their motherland in order to stop the armed conflict in Donbas instigated by Russia?

A huge continuing problem are the mines and explosive devices that are literally all over 7,000 square kilometres of Ukrainian territory. They have killed 92 women in Donbas over the years. A few days ago three children were blown up by a mine near occupied Horlivka in the district of Donetsk. The Ukrainian Parliament is now planning to adopt a major law on humanitarian demining. Military technology and resources, including mines marked as manufactured in the Russian Federation, are coming in over an uncontrolled 400-kilometre stretch of the Russian-Ukrainian border. That is why Ukraine has been insisting on the speedy launch of a peacekeeping mission for Donbas under the auspices of the United Nations, with a broad mandate for an interim administration. That is essential if we are to prevent a humanitarian disaster and protect the civilian population, especially women and children, who are the most vulnerable of all. Needless to say,

Ukraine would welcome a mission that included as many women peacekeepers as possible.

As Ukraine's representative to the humanitarian group in Minsk, my main efforts have been aimed at freeing hostages. Over the course of the war, we have been able to liberate or find 258 women who were hostages of illegal armed groups. Right now six Ukrainian women are still held captive, and 21 have been declared missing, while about 1,500 women have been widowed and more than 2,000 have lost their sons.

Many people here will have heard the names of Oleh Sentsov, Serhiy Glondar, Uzair and Teimur Abdullayev, Volodymyr Balukh and 70 other Ukrainian political prisoners held in Russian Federation jails, as well as the dozens of prisoners illegally imprisoned on the territory of occupied Donbas. Their families — mothers, wives, sisters and daughters who are unable to see or speak to them — continue to wait for them. Today the European Parliament awarded Oleh Sentsov the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. We welcome that decision and encourage all States Members of the United Nations to make every effort to liberate Oleh Sentsov and the other political prisoners. Oleh should be able to receive his prize in person, not through intermediaries.

This year, as Ukraine's representative to the Minsk humanitarian group, I have made dozens of proposals to the Russian Federation to hand over to Moscow Russians who have been convicted of serious crimes in Ukraine in exchange for our prisoners in Crimea, a humanitarian gesture that would ease the lives of hundreds of women and children. However, so far Russia has not responded to our proposal and has blocked questions about freeing its hostages and political prisoners. Incidentally, it is not only Ukrainian women who have been hoping for a large-scale liberation of prisoners on both sides, which Ukraine has proposed doing as soon as possible. Russian women — the wives and mothers of Russian soldiers detained in Ukraine — are also asking the Russian Federation to do this. It would be a wonderful humanitarian gesture on both sides. All that is needed is the political will.

With a view to defining the full extent of the violations of human rights, including sexual violence, in the occupied territories of Crimea and Donbas, Ukraine has been insisting that special observers be sent from the special monitoring and humanitarian missions of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Incidentally, the International Committee of the Red Cross has never been given access to Ukrainian political prisoners held in Russian territory or in the occupied areas, which is a gross violation of their human rights. Prisoners who have been released have spoken about the existence of sexual violence. The militants have not shrunk from assaulting members of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission. Last year, in May 2017, a representative of the Special Monitoring Mission was sexually harassed by an armed militant who simply refused to let her pass. The crime was prevented only by the intervention of her colleagues from the Mission. We were also told about sexual violence by 12 prisoners who were freed in December 2014, who included both men and women, and many of them mentioned incidents of group sexual violence.

In conclusion, I would like to quote Max van der Stoel, who said that

> "[m]ankind has spent centuries perfecting the art of war. We are still in our infancy when it comes to building peace."

That is why I believe that the problem of ensuring peace in any part of the world is key to guaranteeing human rights and sustainable development. Not only has the time come for a decisive increase in the role of women in that process, it also demands practical realization. We have a unique opportunity to reject bureaucratic declarations and take practical steps to advance women's rights, enable their participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction and protect them from sexual and gender-based violence. I urge us to ramp up those efforts without delay.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. I also want to inform everyone that we will be continuing this open debate through the lunch hour, as we have a long list of speakers.

I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for taking up this very important topic

today. I would also like to thank the briefers for their very powerful statements.

Past experience demonstrates that women's effective participation and influence in the peace process are closely linked to sustaining peace. However, we must admit the reality of women's poor representation in major peace processes and the lack of progress in their participation. As we approach 2020 and the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), we need more vigorous efforts on the part of all actors in the international community if we are to fully implement the normative framework.

Japan attaches great importance to supporting women's participation and protecting their rights in the area of peace and security, as one of the three core pillars of our efforts to create a society where women shine. Today I would like to share two examples of what we are doing in that area. First, Japan supports the UN-Women project in Kenya designed to promote women's substantial participation at the community level. In the past year, more than 8,000 Kenyan civilian women and female police officers have been given prevention and response training for combating violent radicalization, with an additional 1,000 women and young people receiving income-generating skills training. The project encourages women to be confident, active players in protecting their communities from violent-extremist influences.

Secondly, Japan has been helping to strengthen the capacity and representation of female police officers in Afghanistan, who have increased their knowledge and skills relating to the provision of effective protection and support to women who have experienced violence. Their strong motivation in working for peace and security encourages other women, including the survivors of violence. Japan believes that the leadership of women in the area of peace and security is key to realizing sustaining peace.

In order to promote women's political and economic empowerment and their meaningful participation in sustaining peace, Japan intends to strengthen cooperation in multilateral fields, especially in the following aspects. First, sexual violence in conflict is a major obstacle to sustaining peace, and commitments are necessary from both donor and conflict-affected Governments. Japan is one of the top donors to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict through contributions totalling $9.5 million, and we have seen substantial results from those efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We reiterate our ongoing support for its work.

Secondly, Japan is proud to support the Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection in Crisis Response programme, also known as LEAP, under the UN-Women's Flagship Programming Initiatives. In that regard, Japan has contributed $8.7 million in 2018 to promote women's resilience. Thirdly, Japan has designated Sri Lanka as a partnership country under the Women, Peace and Security Partnership Initiative of the Group of Seven, based on our historically excellent bilateral relationship. We would like to expand our assistance targeted towards the meaningful involvement of conflict-affected women in order to promote the women and peace and security agenda in Sri Lanka.

Before concluding, I would like to mention that Japan will host the World Assembly for Women in Tokyo on 23 and 24 March 2019. Women and peace and security will be one of the main topics of discussion. We are looking forward to welcoming guests and participants from all over the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mrs. Tripathi (India): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate on this important issue. We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2018/900) and all of the briefers for their statements.

The normative and operative frameworks relating to the women and peace and security agenda have been considerably strengthened across the United Nations system over the past two decades. Today there is a greater awareness of the centrality of women's meaningful participation in peace processes and of the incorporation of gender perspectives into United Nations peace and security efforts. We appreciate the Secretary-General's emphasis and achievements on gender parity among the United Nations senior leadership.

The importance of women's active engagement and leadership is now well established in peace and reconciliation processes and in countering the spread of violent extremism. Action-oriented initiatives such as the African Women Leaders Network, and encouraging results from peace processes, including in Colombia and Guinea-Bissau, affirm women's important role in

bringing transformative changes. Despite those efforts, women's roles and perspectives in peace processes remain largely neglected. Sexual violence, abductions and human trafficking continue to be used as weapons of war by non-State actors and terrorist organizations in armed conflicts. Rapidly expanding transboundary criminal networks finance terror, supply arms, recruit and train foreign fighters, and destabilize whole regions, which disproportionately affects women. The large-scale movements of refugees resulting from armed conflicts increase women's vulnerability to discrimination and exploitation. No country is in a position to effectively counter those challenges alone.

The issue of women and peace and security also has to be viewed in a wider societal context, involving gender and development issues that are dealt with outside the Council. The mutually reinforcing roles of gender-responsive development and the building of peaceful and resilient societies are well recognized. The normative work being done outside the Council in that regard, including in the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women must continue to inform our actions. The normative work done by UN-Women and other agencies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is of relevance for building capacities. The Peacebuilding Fund has committed more than one third of its funding to gender-mainstreaming programmes.

As the General Assembly focuses on gender-sensitive and inclusive development to build peaceful and resilient societies, the Council must push for effective cooperation on countering terrorism, which threatens peace and security. It must make every effort to realize the full potential of integrating considerations of women and peace and security into sanctions regimes. The Council's Sanctions Committees should address the issue of proactively listing terrorist individuals and entities involved in sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict. International cooperation on the prosecution of criminals engaged in transnational crimes is important in order to ensure justice for the victims, many of whom are women and girls.

In India, the discourse on women's empowerment has progressed from viewing women as beneficiaries of welfare schemes to mainstreaming their concerns and harnessing their leadership for inclusive development. More than 1.3 million directly elected women representatives participate in formulating and implementing gender-responsive policies in India. Gender-based budgeting has proved beneficial for the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in policy implementation across sectors.

India is committed to a higher representation of women in peacekeeping missions and has fulfilled its pledge to ensure that 15 per cent of military observers are women. The landmark first-ever deployment by the United Nations of an all-female Indian formed police unit in Liberia became a role model for local women to participate in policing and the relevant rule-of-law frameworks. India is also committed to providing a second such formed police unit. India partners UN-Women in capacity-building initiatives at the New Delhi-based Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping, which has now conducted a third United Nations female military officers course for 40 women officers from 26 countries. We also provide adequate predeployment training on gender sensitization to our peacekeeping forces.

We fully support the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation and abuse and his strong commitment to achieving gender parity in peace operations. India stands ready to engage with our partners to work towards ensuring the meaningful participation of women and the mainstreaming of women and peace and security considerations in building inclusive, peaceful and resilient societies.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Mr. Fernández de Soto Valderrama (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank you, Sir, in your capacity as President of the Security Council, for convening today's open debate on women and peace and security. It is a special privilege for me that my first statement as Permanent Representative of my country is on that topic, on which Colombia has so many lessons learned to share with the international community. I would also like to express my appreciation for the briefings and contributions of Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, and civil-society representative Randa Siniora Atallah.

We appreciate the reference to Colombia and its peace process in the concept note for this open debate (S/2018/904, annex) as a positive example of the implementation of the contents of resolution 1325 (2000), although, as you rightly said, Mr. President, we still have many challenges ahead of us.

We know that women's participation and political and economic empowerment, and the promotion of their leadership, are essential to achieving the goal of a peaceful and inclusive society based on the principles of legality, entrepreneurship and equality. That is why I would like to highlight two milestones that have marked the two months since the Government of President Iván Duque Márquez took power. For the first time in its history, Colombia has a woman in the position of Vice-President of the Republic, who, in addition to her own duties, has been tasked with supporting the President in promoting gender parity. The President has also formed the first gender-balanced Cabinet in the history of Colombia, since eight of the 16 ministries are led by women. It is crucial to promote women's political and economic empowerment by example and through concrete actions. It is the only way we can help to eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women.

In Colombia's view, with regard to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, gender parity and women's empowerment must continue to be critical issues on the international agenda. International commitments in that area should reflect the recognition and guarantee of women's rights. We must ensure that they are integrated into foreign policy and all sectors at the State level. In that regard, and with the aim of promoting women's participation and empowerment in delivering sustainable development throughout our country, our forthcoming new national development plan will include a section on gender parity in public policy, a plan to guarantee a life free of violence, the prevention of adolescent pregnancy, the establishment of a gender equality centre and care for victims of conflict.

Colombia's experience with regard to the topic of this open debate is known to the entire Security Council. It is important for us to continue to prioritize the promotion of women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in peacebuilding. During the peace process we signed nearly two years ago, there were women among the peace negotiators at the negotiating table and a gender subcommittee was formed to ensure the inclusion of a gender-sensitive approach in the peace agreement. That achievement was acknowledged by the Secretary-General when he affirmed that Colombia's peace agreement contained more than 100 gender-specific provisions. This week, President Duque announced that we had to make rapid progress in achieving the highest rate of women's participation in our armed forces' leadership, for which Colombia has made major reforms that we will continue to strengthen. We share the concerns expressed by civil society about situations in Colombia in which women social leaders and human rights defenders have been threatened or killed. We will continue to redouble our efforts to strengthen the existing institutional framework and to accelerate investigations and protection measures against that scourge. Our lessons learned on the role of women in achieving and building peace can be applied in other contexts and regions. Women and girls play a fundamental role in my country. We believe firmly in their role in the building of democratic and inclusive societies.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

Mr. Mlynár (Slovakia): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important annual debate on women and peace and security. I would also like to thank all the briefers for their comprehensive presentations. I would like to particularly acknowledge the significant contribution of the Secretary-General in promoting and upholding the agenda of women and peace and security in United Nations peace efforts.

My delegation associates itself with the statement to be delivered later today by the observer of the European Union.

The role of women and girls in peace processes and humanitarian response, and women's active participation in mediation, conflict prevention, security-sector reform, peacebuilding and peacekeeping, is huge but nevertheless often neglected, or at least underappreciated. Today I would like to limit my statement to three key areas that are important to Slovakia.

First, let us look at the normative framework and reality on the ground. We have created a sufficient framework, we believe, of resolutions and commitments, but their implementation is still insufficient. Women's role in sustaining peace is undoubtable. Even though we agreed to promote women's meaningful participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations, we have not borne witness to a rising number of women peacekeepers. In fact, that number has not changed drastically over the past 10 years; it has only risen from

2 to 4 per cent of women soldiers. One year after the Secretary-General launched the system-wide gender parity strategy, we still have only about 28 per cent of women deployed in the field. That is the same figure as about 12 months ago. We should reflect carefully on the recently-published report of the Secretary-General on women peace and security (S/2018/900), which, among other things, highlights gaps and challenges that remain ahead of us. The report, together with resolution 2242 (2015), provides a clear road map of what needs to be done and how to do it in an efficient and timely manner.

Secondly, women's political and economic empowerment must be at the centre of our women and peace and security efforts. Focus must be put on ensuring women's economic rights and their full participation in economic processes, access to resources, employment and education. We need to do better in the protection of women human rights defenders and women key actors in politics, public life and society. Only that way will we be able to ensure their political empowerment and equal participation in all spheres of life. To successfully achieve that, we also need to ensure the sufficient funding of and resources for the women and peace and security agenda, mostly in conflict-affected country.

I know that earlier today we all had a chance to congratulate the newly elected President of Ethiopia, Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde, with whom I had the privilege of working in Nairobi for three and a half years. It was really a moment of importance to all of us to have one of the Under-Secretaries-General become the first woman President of Ethiopia. Of course, examples such as that are critical, and we all look forward to supporting her role and continuing to work with her.

Thirdly, women's role in the security sector should not be underestimated. Resolution 2151 (2014) on security sector reform (SSR) underscores the importance of women's equal and effective participation and full involvement in all stages of SSR processes. Slovakia, as a co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform, works closely with the Group of Friends of Gender Parity to explore opportunities to strengthen United Nations support for gender-responsive national SSR processes, enhance gender parity and gender equality and improve programming and advocacy efforts. Therefore, the United Nations approach to security sector reform must be gender-sensitive in its planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. Only with increased female participation in civilian oversight and SSR processes can we achieve the broad trust of the people in the security sector, in particular in post-conflict societies.

Just last week the Group of Friends of SSR organized a dialogue on SSR in the Central African Republic with the participation of the Minister of Defence of that country. Among the key messages was also the need to build not only an efficient but also a fully inclusive security sector. A strong commitment of the Government is crucial in that regard.

In conclusion, the more we focus on the practical implementation of what we have politically declared and agreed upon, the sooner we will observe more tangible and positive results on the ground and in the everyday lives of people. That is what I believe should be strongly at the centre of our attention.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Ms. Koçyiğit Grba (Turkey): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the MIKTA countries, namely, Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia. At the outset, we would like to express our appreciation to the Bolivian presidency for convening today's open debate on the women and peace and security agenda. We also thank the Secretary-General for his recent report (S/2018/900).

As we approach the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), which set the foundation for the women and peace and security agenda, the MIKTA countries believe that it is critical to take stock of our achievements and discuss our further collective and individual efforts.

The MIKTA countries recognize the key role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. We remain committed to increasing women's participation in all aspects of peace and security, including women's political participation and leadership. We believe that women's political and economic empowerment is crucial to both the prevention of conflicts and the stabilization of societies emerging from armed conflict. We also attach importance to our commitment to achieving gender equality, which is key to the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that regard, we would like to note that all MIKTA countries are members of the Group of Friends of Gender Parity.

The MIKTA countries acknowledge the importance of seven subsequent resolutions of the Security

Council in establishing a sound normative framework for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda by the United Nations system and Member States. As a result, there has been increased development of programmes to increase women's participation as leaders in military and law enforcement and as peacebuilders in treaty and peace agreement negotiations. There has been deeper awareness and more serious attention to the vulnerability and asymmetrical impact of conflict on women.

Despite the progress made, women and girls still face daunting challenges. We note with deep concern that sexual violence has become a routine tactical element of war and armed conflict. Rape, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, sexual abuse and torture constitute abhorrent violations of human rights and human dignity. We underscore that sexual abuse and gender-based violence are linked to gender inequality, poverty, exclusion and discrimination.

The MIKTA countries therefore believe that it is imperative to directly address those root causes of conflict, including through the promotion of gender equality and the greater and meaningful participation of women in all forms of mediation, the prevention of conflicts, United Nations peacekeeping operations, post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding processes. We also support the importance of increasing gender advisers in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Further efforts are required to see more women gain leadership seats at the negotiating table, enhance their engagement in political and economic decision-making at all stages of the peace process, and implement peace agreements. According to UN-Women statistics, civilians — the majority of whom are women and children — constitute almost 90 per cent of the casualties in contemporary conflicts, whereas fewer than 4 per cent of signatories to peace agreements are women and fewer than 10 per cent of negotiators at peace tables are women.

At a time when the causes and effects of conflicts easily spread across borders, regional and international coordination and cooperation remain important tools in addressing the challenges we face. With that understanding, MIKTA, as a cross-regional group of countries on different continents, underscores its readiness to contribute to international efforts to advance the women and peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): At the outset, let me thank Bolivia for organizing this open debate on this very important issue. We also thank the briefers for their insightful remarks.

Ending conflicts, forging peace, alleviating human suffering, addressing injustice, protecting human rights and placing the world on a safer path are at the heart of our work here at the United Nations, whose seventy-third anniversary we marked only yesterday. While considerable progress has been made at the normative level on several counts, conflicts and violence are in fact on the rise. According to the Secretary General's report (S/2018/900), more countries are experiencing some form of violent conflict than at any time in the past 30 years. Conflicts are also becoming ever-more complex and protracted. Delayed and weak responses — often dictated by big-Power rivalry and expedient policies — are perpetuating human suffering. In all that turmoil, instability and chaos, women, especially young girls, continue to suffer disproportionate and lasting consequences. In many conflict zones, they remain soft targets, often exploited by aggressors with impunity as a war tactic to humiliate and terrorize civilians.

The Security Council's landmark resolution 1325 (2000) was a watershed moment that rightfully brought women's issues to the centre of the global conflict prevention debate and in the larger context of international peace and security. Women across the world, as other speakers acknowledged earlier, have emerged as leaders and consensus-builders, inspiring hopes of peace and prosperity amid conflict and violence. Over the years, the women and peace and security agenda has become a powerful vehicle to ensure the feminization of peace in a post-conflict environment. Yet — and here is the paradox — women remain largely invisible to and excluded from peace processes and negotiations.

The women and peace and security agenda, at its core, is an attempt to bring new perspectives to conflict resolution. It focuses on the root causes and drivers of conflicts and shines a much-needed light on the most oppressed and marginalized. By focusing on creating an enabling environment for the more meaningful participation of women, it also aims to bring them to the table as true stakeholders, able to define and protect

their interests. In that regard, I would like to emphasize briefly five specific points.

First, the Security Council must play its primary role of maintaining peace and security by focusing on the root causes of conflicts, especially on the protracted disputes on its agenda, like Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine, where women suffer disproportionately from the violence caused by foreign occupation.

Secondly, the international community must ensure that equal attention is given to all four pillars of the women and peace and security agenda — prevention, participation, protection and recovery — and that the framework is implemented at all levels.

Thirdly, national human rights institutions are a critical link in the chain of accountability for women's rights violations, as well as their prevention. Efforts to strengthen their work should be supported.

Fourthly, despite clear evidence to suggest that the active participation of women during peace processes significantly enhances the prospects for success, women continue to remain on the sidelines of the peace continuum. Women's special skills in mediation makes them particularly suited as the Secretary-General's Special Envoys and Special Representatives. Yet there are few who head such missions. That clearly needs to change.

Fifthly, to ensure the greater participation of women in peacekeeping mandates, gender perspectives need to be fully integrated into the peacebuilding paradigm to reinforce the protection environment. That would greatly enhance women's role in peace accords, as well as in post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction phases.

My country's own experience shows that giving women a key role brings fresh perspectives and builds a solid foundation for a vibrant society. We remain determined to carry forward our ambitious domestic agenda for women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming, which my country's new Government has made a top priority, and we will continue to engage constructively with the international community in that regard.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Norway. **Ms. Skåre** (Norway): I am making this statement on behalf of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Norway.

We thank Bolivia for initiating this open debate and welcome the annual report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/900).

We are no closer to peace. Women's security and rights are still threatened, specifically targeted by violent extremists. Women refugees are exposed to violence. Women's rights defenders are increasingly vulnerable. Sexual violence is endemic. This year's Nobel Peace Prize laureates expose human suffering that tears people apart and undermines peace and show us how to respond. Let us.

It has become decidedly harder to ignore women in peace and security efforts. The Secretary-General's strong leadership is crucial, as evidenced by the United Nations system-wide gender parity strategy; the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security; the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network; the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security; networks, including the Women's Military Network; and the increasing number of national action plans and strategies to implement them effectively.

We benefit greatly from the consistent work of civil society, including the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security and organizations like the International Civil Society Action Network, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, local women's groups and others. In South Sudan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Colombia, Syria and Liberia, women have found ways to engage. Their efforts increasingly coincide with those of the United Nations and regional organizations, as innovative inclusion mechanisms evolve, including subcommissions, situation rooms, women's advisory boards, and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

We would like to congratulate Ethiopia on its recently elected Madam President Sahle-Work Zewde. There is progress, but, as we approach the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), we aspire to more. Women fill more leadership positions in the United Nations and elsewhere, but are still underrepresented at all levels of peacekeeping. We must connect the peace mediation tracks better and ensure that inclusion mechanisms complement, rather than replace, efforts to include women on the formal track. We must enhance conflict analysis with a gender perspective and support the gender mainstreaming of peace operations.

Our support for United Nations reform, UN-Women, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is part of our response, as are the women mediator networks. Regional networks of women mediators are in New York now to explore opportunities for further cooperation. We must prepare the ground for inclusive processes even in initial peace talks and focus as much on women's inclusion and rights in the implementation of peace agreements as in the negotiation phase.

A gender adviser position should be established in all operational headquarters, while leaders bear the ultimate responsibility to deliver. The United Nations high-level seminar on gender and inclusive mediation processes builds leaders' competence and capacity. Men must champion this cause as eagerly as women. We founded the Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations to engage with military actors in their work related to women, peace and security.

We are your consistent partners, Mr. President, for a common, peaceful and secure future. Promoting women's participation is not a gesture to women; it is a question of effectively and sustainably preventing and resolving conflicts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Albania.

Ms. Kadare (Albania): Albania welcomes this open debate on such an important theme, and I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2018/900), as well as the briefers for bringing to this Chamber the perspective of civil society.

Albania aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union, and I wish to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

We now have clear evidence that the meaningful participation of women contributes to the success of peace talks, accelerates economic recovery, improves humanitarian assistance, helps counter violent extremism and prevents human rights violations. Since the landmark adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), there has been significant progress, and Member States have gradually integrated its principles and obligations into their national legal frameworks.

Nevertheless, a clear gap persists between achievements on paper and the reality on the ground. Despite international commitment, the meaningful inclusion of women in preventing conflicts and negotiating peace processes is still negligible, and it is challenged by the lack of access to political and economic resources, as well as a predominantly masculine mentality of domestic and international politics. The facts speak for themselves — from 1990 to 2017, only 2 per cent of mediators in formal peace processes were women.

In response, we need to strengthen our resolve and increase the cooperation among Member States, the United Nations and civil society in order to impact change on the ground. In that regard, the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network and other concrete mechanisms such as the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, of which Albania is an active member, have great potential to prevent and resolve conflicts through the increased and meaningful participation of women.

Albania has made significant progress in adopting policies relevant to the empowerment of women, the political participation of women in all levels of governance and the achievement of gender equality. I am proud to announce today that in September the Albanian Government approved its first national action plan for resolution 1325 (2000). With the support of our Dutch partners, UN-Women and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, we brought together not only the Government stakeholders, but also civil society and women's groups, in order to increase ownership, legitimacy and sustainability. While the adoption of the national action plan was an important milestone, we are well aware that its implementation remains a challenge, especially in terms of financial support. In that context we will continue to work closely with donors and partners and will spare no effort in ensuring the full implementation of the plan.

In terms of women's participation in political and public life in Albania, the percentage of women members of Parliament is 29.3 per cent, with 41 female members of Parliament. Our current Government, led by Prime Minister Rama, has achieved full gender parity, with half of its members being women, including the Minister of Defence. In 2017, the number of women ambassadors increased to 26 per cent and the number of consuls to 33 per cent, thereby reaching the highest percentage ever of high-ranking women in the Albanian foreign service.

In conclusion, we invite the United Nations to ensure that qualitative gender perspectives are integrated across all its activities. Albania strongly supports the Secretary-General's efforts and personal commitment to placing women at the centre of the United Nations conflict prevention platform, and also to achieve gender parity within the United Nations system. We need a gender equal United Nations to achieve a gender equal world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Argentina.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

I will deliver an abbreviated version of my statement. The complete version will be made available to the Secretariat.

At the outset, I should like to thank the Bolivian presidency for taking the initiative to organize this debate, and for the special emphasis on the issue of women's participation in the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts. We also thank the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Woman and Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah for their briefings.

Argentina reiterates its firm commitment to the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the continued development of the women and peace and security agenda. Education is an essential factor in promoting the comprehensive empowerment of women of all ages and their effective participation in decision-making processes at all levels, with a view to promoting peace, security, development and the full enjoyment of human rights. In that regard, protecting education and guaranteeing continuous access to safe education during conflicts is a fundamental objective that would help to protect women and girls from the risks of armed conflict. In that framework, in 2017 Argentina and Norway organized the second Conference on Safe Schools to disseminate the Safe Schools Declaration and Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. In that regard, we encourage all Members of the United Nations, and especially the members of the Council, to endorse the Declaration.

With regard to concrete actions to implement resolution 1325 (2000), on women's participation in conflict resolution and sustainable peacebuilding, in August the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Argentina and the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights launched the creation of a federal network of mediators, with a gender perspective. The network is made up of more than 50 professionals from all the provinces of our country and promotes the substantive involvement of women in peacebuilding processes and in the handling of crisis situations and everyday community conflicts.

Similarly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in coordination with the Embassy of Canada in Buenos Aires and the non-governmental organization Latin American Security and Defence Network, has begun to develop an assessment project about the status quo of the inclusion of the gender perspective in the 10 ministries involved in the implementation of the resolution 1325 (2000) national action plan. In that regard, it is expected that the results of that mapping will be ready by March 2019. Those are some examples of concrete measures to increase the participation of women in conflict prevent and resolution processes, and we hope that they can serve as the basis for a fruitful exchange of relevant good practices.

In conclusion, we reiterate once again the strong support of Argentina for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, and the fundamental role played by gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in promoting the agency and the active participation of all women in the prevention of conflicts, the peaceful settlement of conflicts, peacebuilding efforts and post-conflict accountability.

Mr. Skinner-Kleé Arenales (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I should like to thank the Plurinational State of Bolivia for organizing this important debate, as well as for the concept note that your delegation has prepared (see S/2018/904, annex).

I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing. I also thank Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah for their remarks.

Eighteen years have passed since resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted. Its adoption was a recognition of the participation of women, whose contribution is very significant to peacebuilding. Each year, the Council has witnessed the relevance of resolution 1325 (2000), which reminds us that without the safety of women and girls, lasting peace cannot be achieved. It is precisely through debates like the one that brings us together

today that we contribute added value to ensuring the full implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

During our membership in the Council during the 2012-2013 biennium, Guatemala deemed it important to discuss this issue, taking into account the fact that violence against women in armed conflicts is a flagrant violation of human rights that requires the appropriate attention to prevent such abuses. During this debate, we have broached strategies that would allow us to diminish the tragic effects of armed conflicts on women and girls, particularly — and sadly — murder, systematic violations of their rights, sexual slavery and forced pregnancies, among others.

Once again my delegation reiterates to the Council the importance of the leadership and participation of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peacebuilding. We believe that it is necessary to increase women's representation at all levels of decision-making in such institutions as national and regional mechanisms set up for conflict prevention and resolution and that, above all, it is important to examine issues related to women's participation in peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

We have witnessed that gender discrimination remains an obstacle to women, and consequently is also an obstacle to their overall human development. Greater participation by women has a positive impact on addressing some of the most urgent challenges of our time, including migration, climate change and, indeed, conflict prevention. In that regard, my delegation wishes to reiterate that the proper implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) requires political will on the part of all the competent bodies of States. Owing to the importance that my country attaches to the proper implementation and application of the resolution, we actively participated in the two meetings of the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network, the first having taken place in Alicante, Spain, in 2016, and the other in Berlin, Germany, in April 2018. The meetings made it possible to establish a platform for the exchange of experiences and best practices at the international level on the global women and peace and security agenda. We are convinced that the strategic alliances that have been generated within the Network are of special importance to achieving the goal of a world with inclusive peaceful societies that advocate for protecting and strengthening women's rights in all their aspects. We wish Namibia, which will host the next meeting of Focal Points Network, a successful and fruitful meeting.

Finally, the Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. To achieve that goal, it recognizes the need for a set of mechanisms and instruments applicable according to the situation and circumstances. We therefore recognize that the magnitude and nature of the challenge of sustaining peace calls for close strategic and operational partnerships among the United Nations, Governments and other key stakeholders with a view to jointly achieving sustainable peace on the ground. Accordingly, Guatemala reiterates its position that, within the framework of international human rights, in particular the obligations of States signatories to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provides a solid basis for sustaining peace, we as an Organization are clear that the collective work of the United Nations system to promote human rights should help identify root causes and prevent conflict through the greater participation by women.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Penaranda (Philippines): On the occasion of the eighteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the Philippines reaffirms its commitment to promoting the role of women in peacebuilding.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be made later on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

In March 2017, the Philippines launched the second cycle of its national action plan on women and peace and security and, within 16 months, had achieved significant milestones under the pillars of empowerment and participation, protection and prevention, and promotion and mainstreaming of women's roles in peace and security.

Women meaningfully participated in the peace process with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front that led to the eventual passage of the Bangsamoro Organic Law last July. Five members of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission are women. Even during the negotiations, both panels were composed of female members who championed the women's agenda. Among the provisions of the Bangsamoro Organic Law is the allocation of reserved seats for women in the Bangsamoro Parliament and Cabinet.

The Government called on women who were displaced by the Marawi siege to be actively involved in capacity-building projects for community resilience. One of the projects resulted in an action plan to ensure that communities in transitional shelters peacefully coexist and are protected from any threat or harm. The action plan will be implemented by women leaders themselves. The so-called Hijab troopers, an all-female team within the armed forces and the police, continue to fight the cultural and psychological aspects of the battle in Marawi. They assist in the implementation of programmes that help internally displaced persons recover from the traumatizing experience of battle. Their focus is on social healing and reconciliation as they seek to curb the tide of violent extremism. To ensure women's enjoyment of their human rights and prevent violations of those rights in armed conflicts and post-conflict situations, the Bangsamoro Organic Law stresses the right of women to be protected from exploitation, abuse and discrimination, as embodied in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

On the implementation of the gender-specific recommendations of the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission, the Philippines is the first country in the world to formulate and implement a regional action plan on women and peace and security. The plan is part of the Government's efforts to implement resolution 1325 (2000) locally. It is now in its second year of implementation.

Consistent with our goal to promote and mainstream gender perspectives in all aspects of conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding, the Government established agency strategic action plans to operationalize the commitments made under the national action plan on women and peace and security. The plans constitute the translation of the action points of the national action plans into concrete programmes, activities and projects.

Continued capacity-building for local Government units, Government agencies and civil society is also being undertaken to ensure that the women and peace and security agenda is mainstreamed in their gender and development plans and budgets for sustainability. As we move the process forward, the Philippines will continue to support the goal of realizing the transformational potential of women's equality and their meaningful economic and political participation for peace and development.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Cho Tae-yul (Republic of Korea): Let me also begin by commending your initiative, Mr. President, to convene today's open debate on the critical issue of women and peace and security and by thanking the briefers for their informative presentations.

While aligning myself with the statement to be made by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security and the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Turkey on behalf of the MIKTA group of countries — namely, Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey and Australia — I would like to make some brief comments on this important topic in my national capacity.

Before I do so, allow me to congratulate this year's Nobel Peace laureates, Ms. Nadia Murad and Mr. Denis Mukwege, for their great contributions in fighting wartime sexual violence. I see their receiving this prize as the global community's solemn declaration of solidarity with the victims of wartime sexual violence. It holds all the more meaning for my country, which still endeavours to support and honour the so-called comfort women victimized during the Second World War and turn their painful experience into lessons of history.

Against that historical backdrop, the Republic of Korea has the special moral obligation and political will to make further contributions in advancing the women and peace and security agenda. As part of our efforts in that regard, my Government recently launched a new initiative called "Action with Women and Peace". The initiative involves increased funding and a policy focus directed towards protecting women and girls during and after armed conflicts and empowering them in post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding processes.

Nearly two decades of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda has yielded considerable progress. However, there remains a significant gap between our goals and the reality on the ground. Women are still among the most vulnerable groups in conflicts, and much needs to be done in terms of women's political and economic empowerment. Bearing that in mind, I would like to highlight the following three points as we strive to strengthen the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

First, we must redouble our efforts to promote women's leadership and participation in all aspects of peace and security.

As the Secretary-General's report on women and peace and security (S/2018/900) rightly points out, women too often remain underrepresented in our efforts towards conflict resolution. From 1990 through 2017, women constituted only 2 per cent of mediators and 8 per cent of negotiators.

It is in this context that I commend the Secretary-General's system-wide strategy for gender parity, which led to the achievement of gender parity in the United Nations Senior Management Group and among Resident Coordinators. I encourage the United Nations to continue to build upon this remarkable achievement.

In recent years, my Government has put a great deal of emphasis on increasing women's participation in the peace and security arena. We have now exceeded the 15 per cent goal we set for female staff officers and military observers in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

The ratio of women among Cabinet members has also reached 27.8 per cent, the highest in our history. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is currently led by the first-ever female Minister, 60.9 per cent of all 650 diplomats newly recruited over the past 10 years have been women, and their retention rate stands at 94.5 per cent. It is indeed a remarkable achievement, but my Government's efforts to achieve gender parity will not stop here. Elevating women's participation in all decision-making processes will continue to be a key element of our second national action plan.

Secondly, we need to strengthen the role and visibility of civil society in advancing the women and peace and security agenda. In his report on that agenda, the Secretary-General voiced concerns about shrinking space and funding for civil-society organizations, although we can benefit immensely from their expertise and grass-roots networks.

In the case of the Republic of Korea, civil society's active participation in advancing the women and peace and security agenda has been at the heart of our national action plan from the very beginning, and we will monitor its implementation together with civil expert groups. As part of our new initiative entitled "Action with Women and Peace," we will host an international conference under the tentative title of "Seoul Forum for Women and Peace" next year. We hope that it will serve as a valuable forum for shedding light on best practices and channelling the expertise and experience of civil society into concrete national policies.

Thirdly, more resources and attention should be directed towards the empowerment of local communities. A sustainable and long-term solution to sexual violence in conflict as well as the promotion of women's representation is possible only when local community leaders become advocates for women's rights and support the mainstreaming of gender perspective into post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding processes.

It is for this reason that my Government has partnered with UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund and launched new development cooperation projects aimed at increasing awareness among and the empowerment of local communities, providing safe spaces and legal support. Our new women and peace and security project, through the African Union Peace Fund, will also help local communities be better prepared to increase women's participation in various peace processes.

With the twentieth anniversary of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) around the corner, we should no longer be satisfied with celebrating exceptions. We should continue to work to further advance the women and peace and security agenda until its principles become norms rather than goals or best practices. The Republic of Korea will remain firmly committed to working closely with the international community to protect and empower women so that the world will become a better place to live in peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Hungary.

Mrs. Bogyay (Hungary): Hungary aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

I wish to thank Bolivia for providing us the opportunity to reflect on this very, very important topic. Hungary has been working proudly and happily with UN-Women, and I would like to thank in particular its Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, for her briefing this morning.

I am dedicating my speech today to the United Nations Goodwill Ambassador Ms. Nadia Murad, whom we in the United Nations know so well. She

is this year's Nobel Peace Prize laureate. I wish to congratulate her for her commitment, courage and perseverance in her tireless efforts to end conflict-related sexual violence. Nadia is a shining example of how women can become powerful agents for peace, inspiring us all, and of how a woman can work towards conflict prevention and the protection and participation of women and girls in the context of conflict resolution, recovery and peacebuilding.

Hungary is a committed member of the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security. We reaffirm the importance of the protection and promotion of gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of all women and girls, and we strongly support their full inclusion and their active, meaningful and institutionalized participation at all stages and levels of peace processes, in the implementation of peace agreements and in wider decision-making structures.

The United Nations should be leading by example, and here we commend the Secretary-General for achieving gender parity in senior positions at the United Nations.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective and protecting the rights of women and girls in peace and security initiatives, including the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, is also a key aspect of the women and peace and security agenda. Empowering women and girls who are survivors of conflict and violence is vital. We believe in holistic, survivor-focused and community-led initiatives, including youth-led processes, because they are the main contributors to enhancing access to justice, reconciliation and lasting peace. We support the peace initiatives of local women and hope to see the important role of civil society and women-led organizations in sustainable peace recognized.

Moreover, women's increased participation in peacekeeping missions and gender-sensitive strategies for the protection of civilians and humanitarian assistance are key in providing the best assistance possible for women and girls affected by conflict. Hungary is seeking to continually increase the number of deployed female military experts and police officers in United Nations peacekeeping missions.

The protection of the rights of women and girls and their economic empowerment is a powerful means for the prevention of, and their protection in, conflict and a prerequisite for their participation in all aspects of life. We should therefore step up our action to, inter alia, ensure women and girls' right to safe, high-quality and affordable education, adequate and affordable health care, equal recognition before the law, and to eliminate violence and harmful practices against women. Hungary provided a financial contribution to the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and girls to achieve those aims.

The elements of the women and peace and security agenda are interrelated and interconnected. Therefore, to promote its effective implementation, we must ensure a holistic approach at the local, regional and global levels, using all tools available within the United Nations system, in close and comprehensive cooperation among all relevant actors and Governments.

History has shown that women's participation is crucial to achieving sustainable peace, and we reaffirm our commitment and call for reinforced cooperation in this regard.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Jordan.

Ms. Bahous (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this debate on women and peace and security. I also thank Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under-Secretary-General, Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, for her statement. I also thank the Secretary-General for his efforts to advance the women and peace and security agenda and women's empowerment at all levels.

We stress the importance of the full and genuine participation of women in peace and security efforts. We also stress the importance of the provision of needed financing on a regular basis to ensure the implementation the agenda and the empowerment of women at all levels.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan believes that women's role in achieving peace and security is important. In response to resolution 1325 (2000), we have developed a Jordanian action plan in order to activate that resolution for the period 2018-2021. The plan was launched in March by the Jordanian National Commission for Women, which is officially responsible for implementing it, with broad participation of civil society stakeholders. The national plan is in line with

Jordan's commitments under relevant regional and international treaties and conventions, in particular those concerning the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as in the post-conflict period, and carrying out relief and humanitarian work, in addition to ensuring immunization against extremist thought.

Jordan attaches particular importance to women's empowerment at all levels because of our conviction that women are essential to establishing sustainable peace. Our national plan also meets the strategic objectives with regard to armed conflict included in 1995 Beijing Declaration, including women's increased participation in conflict resolution and decision-making. The plan also takes into consideration our commitment to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 5, on achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls, and SDG 16, on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies to achieve sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective and accountable institutions in that regard. The Jordanian national plan establishes the following four strategic objectives for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

First, women's active participation must be strengthened in the security and military sectors and in peacekeeping so asto maintain gender equality and promote women's participation in most field units up to 5 per cent by 2020. We are also working to involve women from the general security sector in various peacekeeping missions. Currently, we are also working to increase the participation of military women in military observation missions and among staff officers in order to reach 15 per cent by the end of this year. That is consistent with the Secretary-General's initiative on peacekeeping action. We have also deployed around 2,573 women police agents and officers to work in terrorism and extremism prevention programmes.

Secondly, we aim to achieve women's active participation in addressing terrorism and violence, as well as in peacebuilding and peacemaking, through awareness-raising and training initiatives to renounce extremism and establish ways to prevent it while activating resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security.

Thirdly, we intend to provide humanitarian, psychological, social, legal, medical, educational and rehabilitating services, as well as to facilitate access to those services for Jordanian women and girls, in addition to women refugees and vulnerable segments of the society that are more exposed to violence and have a genuine need for protection from sexual and physical violence. That is consistent with Jordan's intervention plan to address the Syrian refugee crisis. The plan also takes into account the challenges resulting from that crisis.

Fourthly, we want to promote a social culture that supports gender equality and highlights the important role of women and young women in creating a culture of peace. We want to prepare those women to become ambassadors of peace in their communities. At the moment, we are preparing a project to ensure that Jordanian women can participate in mediation and peace negotiation. In that connection, we underscore the importance of transforming the role of the United Nations from peacekeeping to prevention and addressing the root causes of conflicts. Women play an important role in the prevention of conflicts.

As a co-Chair of the Group of Friends on Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism, Jordan attaches particular attention to protecting women and girls from violent extremism. We take into account the sensitive and pivotal role that women can play in protecting societies from extremism and promoting culture of peace.

Arab women have not been spared the conflicts that have shaken our region for years, or their consequences. Women and girls have suffered the most from displacement, killing and sexual violence. It is important that we pay the necessary attention to this issue so that women and girls become empowered and able to resist. We have to provide rehabilitation programmes so that women refugees and displaced women can be productive members of society and continue their education during the period of displacement and after they return to their countries.

In that regard, Palestinian women are facing difficulties in the occupied Palestinian territories, and we commend their resilience and endurance. Palestinian women are victims of punitive Israeli policies, including restrictions on their movement and arbitrary detentions. Even girls under the age of 18 have been arrested. We must also underscore the violations carried out by the Israeli occupying forces against the women of Jerusalem as part of Israel's policy to change the identity of the historic holy city.

In conclusion, I wish to stress the importance of strongly mobilizing international efforts to counter the root causes of conflicts, involve women in peace and security efforts, and promote the participation of women while strengthening their involvement in civil society. Experience demonstrates that genuine participation of women has a positive impact on the success and sustainability of security and peace plans.

Women play a major and impressive role in building peace. It is impossible to uphold peace in societies without the serious and true participation of women. Nonetheless, it is impossible to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and sustainable peace without empowering women and girls, achieving gender equality and eliminating all forms of discrimination. Jordan will continue to work at the national, regional and international levels to support without delay the women, peace and security agenda in order to ensure a better future for women and girls.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I have the honour to address the security Council on behalf of Latvia, Lithuania and my own country, Estonia.

Allow me to start by commending the Bolivian presidency of the Security Council for the month of October for convening this open debate. We thank the briefers for their remarks and steadfast commitment to this important issue.

Our delegation aligns itself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union.

The empowerment of women and their inclusive engagement, as well as gender equality, are a necessary foundation for a peaceful and sustainable society. We commend the Secretary-General for his dedication to further advancing the women and peace and security agenda. Bearing in mind the broad scope and cross-cutting nature of this agenda, allow me to focus on priority aspects for the Baltic countries.

The Baltic countries emphasize the need for the full and effective participation of women at all stages and all levels of conflict prevention and resolution, as well as peacebuilding. It is of the utmost importance to have a strong focus on prevention. We stand fully behind the recommendation stressed by the Secretary-General that the early warning signs of human rights violations — unfortunately, very often towards women and girls — must be given due consideration when monitoring conflict situations. If we fail to act early, the human political and economic costs can be devastating. Therefore, more alerts, as well as a coordinated and comprehensive approach by Member States and the United Nations system, are essential.

Sexual and gender-based violence is a principal obstacle to inclusive and durable peace. Moreover, considering the link between the international arms trade and gender-based violence, it is crucial to take meaningful steps, including effective investigation and prosecution, in order to terminate impunity.

We would like to emphasize the importance of ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making and in political, economic and public life, as universally recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and welcomed in Security Council resolution 2242 (2015).

Sustainable peace is not possible without the meaningful participation of women in all aspects of peace and security, not only as beneficiaries of the process but as leaders, partners and agents of change. Women's participation in peace processes leads to a 35 per cent increase in an agreement's likelihood of lasting at least 15 years, and therefore it is even more important to address the root causes of women's low participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. We also need to pay particular attention to the needs of women and girls in post-conflict situations, including physical security, health services and reproductive and mental health, as well as to ensure their livelihoods and their participation in decision-making and post-conflict planning.

Peacekeeping operations and uniformed personnel remain the most visible representatives of the United Nations, directly working with communities each day. Our countries — Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia — support the Secretary-General's efforts in the reform process and continuation of the work of gender advisers and experts, both at Headquarters and, more important, in the field.

We also commend the work of the Security Council in mainstreaming gender aspects in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping missions. We continue to contribute to United Nations peacekeeping operations, while striving to ensure gender parity on peacekeeping

troops by encouraging female military and police personnel to apply. Training is crucial to raising awareness and improving the implementation of gender aspects in peace operations. Before their deployment, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian peacekeepers undertake high-quality training on human rights and gender-related issues, including the eradication of sexual exploitation and abuse and preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence.

While recognizing that States bear the primary responsibility to respect and ensure the enjoyment of all human rights by all persons within their territory, as provided for by international law, the scale and complexity of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda requires coherent and comprehensive efforts. In that respect, the pivotal role of civil society, including women's organizations, should be fully recognized. We are pleased that women civil society representatives now regularly brief the Security Council during country-specific meetings. That useful practice should be continued — the more briefings we have on potential conflict zones, the more effective we can be in our actions to prevent the outbreak of conflict.

In conclusion, we are convinced that the time is right to swiftly advance the women and peace and security agenda in the remaining months leading up to the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), as well as the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on women and peace and security. We join others in thanking the Secretary-General for his strong message on the critical importance of realizing the full implementation of this agenda. We also thank Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka for her frank briefing and offer our continued support to UN-Women for its work in advancing this agenda. Our thanks also go to Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah for her important presentation.

As a member of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, the United Arab Emirates endorses the Group's joint statement to be delivered by the representative of Canada.

The United Arab Emirates also adds its voice to those congratulating Ms. Nadia Murad and Dr. Denis Mukwege on being awarded the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize. They have tirelessly dedicated themselves to bringing a spotlight to the plight of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. Their work has tangibly improved the lives of those affected. It is a strong signal of how individual voices can — and must — put women and peace and security at the heart of the global agenda.

Ultimately, Member States hold the primary responsibility for advancing the women and peace and security agenda; the burden of action is on us. As the Executive Director's briefing showed, we are lagging woefully behind in our targets. The Secretary-General's report (S/2018/900), as she stated, should sound a loud alarm bell on systemic failures to bring women into peacekeeping. In fact, the implementation of this agenda on the ground remains a challenge due to, as we know, a confluence of threats ranging from the rise in terrorism and extremism to the targeting of women and girls in conflict zones and the protracted nature of the crises. However, the disappointingly low number of women in peacebuilding — where women make up only 2 per cent of mediators, 5 per cent of witnesses and signatories and 8 percent of negotiators in formal peace processes — is not acceptable. We must all commit to improving those numbers — in fact, our financial contributions should go hand in hand with a demand that women's participation in peace processes reach the 50 per cent mark.

The United Arab Emirates recognizes that financing is critical for the effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in order to move words into action. That is why we have recently launched a "100 per cent women" policy,which aims to ensure that, by 2021, 100 per cent of bilateral and multilateral foreign assistance will target or integrate gender equality and women's empowerment as key components of our policy and programming. We hope that model is replicated and more widely adopted, because research continues to demonstrate the direct relationship between gender equality and the prevention of conflict. We believe that such a policy is a real and tangible way to achieve that.

The United Arab Emirates, like others, also considers its partnership with UN-Women as a key part of the global strategy to implement the women and peace and security agenda. The 2018 contribution of the United Arab Emirates to UN-Women of $5 million

is unearmarked, but we have urged UN-Women to use part of those funds to ensure the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda around the world. We urge others to join us in supporting UN-Women with both words and financial action.

Responding to the Secretary-General's call to increase the number of women in peacekeeping, the United Arab Emirates General Women's Union, our Ministry of Defence and UN-Women will organize a military and peacekeeping training for Arab women — the first of its kind in our region and certainly a step in the right direction.

The United Arab Emirates would like to make three recommendations as we work in partnership with Member States, the United Nations and the international community to drive global progress on this agenda.

First, to state the obvious, financing is essential. The United Arab Emirates endorses the Secretary-General's recommendation for all the relevant United Nations operational entities to track targeted and mainstreamed budgetary allocations and expenditures related to women and peace and security. That data will serve to indicate the progress achieved towards reaching or exceeding the minimum 15 per cent target for programmes that further gender equality and women's empowerment in peacebuilding contexts. We understand that financial support is required if we are to truly promote women's participation in peace and security, which is why we are directing our funding that way.

Secondly, we reiterate the calls of the Secretary-General to improve gender parity in peace operations, not just for the sake of proclaiming gender parity but as an operational imperative.

Finally, it is critical that we advance women's meaningful participation in peace processes around the world and that we continue to document our progress. We must not neglect informal peace processes in that agenda — we know that, since the end of the Cold War, more than half of informal peace processes have involved concerted efforts by women's groups to forge peace. Track 1 and track 2 peace processes must therefore both be supported in that endeavour.

Women's meaningful participation is at the heart of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. The United Arab Emirates will continue to promote women's participation as a key principle of our global peace and security efforts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Singer (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to thank the Plurinational State of Bolivia and you, Sir, as President of the Security Council, for convening this open debate on women and peace and security. Our thanks also go to Secretary-General António Guterres and the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, for their briefings and recommendations. We extend our continued support to UN-Women in its role to advance the women and peace and security agenda. We also thank the civil society representative for enriching this debate by sharing her experience.

Decisions on issues such as the distribution of power, electoral systems, the management of natural resources and the restitution of land and property have a profound impact on the lives of women as well as on prospects for lasting peace. They can influence women's economic and physical security and their political participation, as well as how war crimes against women are prosecuted.

Gender inequality, like poverty, is an injustice that exacerbates conflict and undermines peace. Gender equality and the full participation of women, as well as their political, social and economic empowerment, play a fundamental role in the prevention and resolution of armed conflict, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, the prevention of sexual violence and the protection of women and children.

The women and peace and security agenda has made significant regulatory gains since its inception in 2000. However, despite the adoption of nine resolutions and the progress made, we continue to have serious problems with their implementation. Women and girls are not only victims of conflicts; they are also actors and agents of change. The participation of women at all levels of peace processes is therefore vital. Their contribution to the prevention and reversal of conflicts, as well as to the maintenance of sustainable and lasting peace, is essential. We recall that when we have had more women in international criminal tribunals, there was a significant increase in indictments where sexual violence was considered a war crime.

As recent evidence of the impact of women's participation in mediation and peace processes, we are proud to cite the signing in 2016 of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, ending more than 50 years of conflict and representing the first agreement of its kind to include gender as a central theme. According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/900), in July 45.5 per cent of the commissioners on United Nations-supported truth commissions in Colombia were women. That achievement is also due to the vast number of women and women's organizations that were involved in the process. The Colombian peace agreement should be seen as a benchmark and an inspiration for other peace processes.

Resolution 1325 (2000) is not merely about having more women at the decision-making table, but about integrating their perspectives and that of women's organizations in mediation processes, thereby ensuring women's full and effective participation and the credibility and sustainability of the peace processes themselves. We must therefore redouble our efforts to address existing gaps and structural barriers to women's participation and leadership.

We also recognize — and as experience on the ground indicates — the importance of cooperating with and supporting civil society and human rights defenders in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), and of involving them in the work of the Security Council. However, the threats, violence and killings to which women in civil society and human rights defenders are exposed compel us to urgently establish and strengthen mechanisms for their protection.

We welcome the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security and pledge to participate actively in its work to facilitate a more systematic approach to the Council agenda, including through resolutions, reports and field visits. It is essential to implement the Security Council's normative framework on women and peace and security. The Council should include that agenda and gender analysis in its responses to humanitarian crises, and that it ensure that more female military personnel are deployed in United Nations peacekeeping operations, where their presence empowers other women and makes them feel more identified with the operations.

In that connection, we congratulate the Secretary-General on achieving, for the first time in history, gender parity among Secretariat leadership positions, including through the appointment of a woman as Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the recent appointments of women as Special Representatives to the assistance missions in Somalia and Mali.

As a sign of the Dominican Republic's commitment to zero tolerance on sexual abuse and exploitation, President Danilo Medina signed the voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse and is part of the Secretary-General's Circle of Leadership on that issue.

We celebrate the fact that the fight against sexual violence has gained recognition through the award of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize to activist Nadia Murad and Congolese physician Denis Mukwege. It is not only a recognition of their courageous work in defence of the victims of conflict-related sexual violence, but it is also a beacon of hope in a world where sexual violence is used as a weapon of war to silence, humiliate and terrorize women, girls and their communities.

In conclusion, the Dominican Republic will occupy a position as a non-permanent member of the Security Council starting in January 2019. As such, we would like to reaffirm our commitment to the women and peace and security agenda, and pledge that we will continue to give due attention and priority to that agenda in order to ensure its full and effective implementation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

Mr. Bermúdez Álvarez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*):At the outset, I wish to congratulate Bolivia on having organized this open debate and to thank the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women and civil society representative Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah for their briefings.

Uruguay aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

Today's debate focuses on a very sound concept. The empowerment of women and girls and gender equality are fundamental to conflict prevention and the maintenance of international peace and security. The Secretary-General's report (S/2018/900) highlights that we continue to witness flagrant disrespect for

international human rights law and humanitarian law in various conflicts, particularly with regard to grave violations of women's human rights. Unfortunately, those grave violations are not spontaneous, but are an extension of other violence perpetrated more covertly within societies. That violence is rooted in inequality, widespread discrimination against women and the denial of their fundamental rights, which is why States must take action to address those underlying deeply rooted structural causes in many societies.

By protecting their rights, women will be able to reduce their vulnerability and participate in political and economic life, thereby fully contributing to the growth of their communities. That is key not only for national development, but also for the maintenance of sustainable peace. In that connection, the Uruguayan Government approved a national strategy for gender equality by 2030. It was developed in conjunction with civil society to address inequality and discrimination from a human rights perspective. The strategy includes political and institutional guidelines and establishes a road map to influence public policies and guide State action on gender equality.

Education plays a fundamental role in the political and social empowerment of women. All States must guarantee that right to women and girls. Education enables them to overcome discrimination, allows them to better understand their rights, gives them greater confidence and freedom to make decisions that affect their lives and empowers them to become actors and protagonists of peace.

According to UNESCO, more than 60 million girls around the world do not have access to education, while two thirds of illiterate people around the world are women. Without an education, women and girls are unlikely to escape the cycle of poverty and violence. Uruguay has adhered to the Safe Schools Declaration, launched at the initiative of Argentina and Norway, and expresses its dismay at the increasing number of attacks on schools and universities, many of which have deliberately targeted women and girls as victims. We take this opportunity to encourage other States to endorse the Declaration.

Peacekeeping operations are one of the main instruments available to the Organization; it is now irrefutable that the presence of women in those contingents increases their effectiveness. Uruguay provides a proportion of women that is higher than the average deployment, but we continue to make great efforts to further increase that level of female participation. The National Peace Operations Training Institute of Uruguay also provides mandatory training to the personnel that will be deployed on topics such as preventing and responding to violence against women. At the same time, the Uruguayan Government carries out ongoing work in the implementation of a zero-tolerance policy in cases of abuse, exploitation or other acts that violate the code of conduct.

In parallel to the efforts made at the domestic level, experience shows that, in order to increase the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations, it is essential to cooperate with other troop-contributing countries, Member States and the Organization as a whole. Inspired by that firm conviction, my country was one of the first to support the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative, which includes a collective commitment to implementing the agenda on women and peace and security, guaranteeing in equal footing the full participation of women at all stages of the peace process and increasing the number of uniformed and civilian women in peacekeeping operations. Likewise, the President of Uruguay, Mr. Tabaré Vázquez, is a member of the Circle of Leadership to combat sexual exploitation and abuse, with a commitment to ending impunity and restoring the dignity of the victims.

Uruguay has also joined the Elsie Initiative on Women in Peace Operations, launched by Canada, to ensure an increase in the number of women deployed in peacekeeping operations. I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Council that, next December, my Government will be holding a preparatory meeting with the United Kingdom for the 2019 United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial Conference. We will devote attention to the training of Blue Helmets on issues related to women and peace and security and specific training for women peacekeepers.

Another mechanism that I want to highlight is the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network, established at the behest of Spain, which Uruguay will have the honour to co-chair with Canada in the year 2020. The Network has the potential to generate political momentum and implement resolutions on women's aid and protection, and it is already demonstrating its usefulness with regard to gender cooperation and the exchange of experiences and good practices. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude for the invaluable and constant contribution

of civil society in the defence of women's rights and call for protection and an end to the growing threats and persecution suffered by human rights defenders and the defenders of women's rights.

Allow me to conclude by recalling that, at the time that the Charter of the United Nations was being drafted at the San Francisco Conference, Uruguay, together with a few other countries of the global South that had women in their delegations, requested that an explicit reference to women's rights be included in the Charter. Thanks to that effort, and despite the reluctance of the vast majority of the participating States, we managed to include the only two provisions on gender in the Charter. The equality of the rights of men and women is enshrined in the Preamble and it was established in Article 8 that,

> "The United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs."

Seventy-three years have passed since then. History has shown that, without the participation of women and respect for equality and their fundamental rights, it will not be possible to achieve peace in the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Ms. Jáquez Huacuja (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Bolivia for convening this important open debate to review a topic that undoubtedly has a definitive impact on the peace and security agenda. Eighteen years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), it is clear that the role of women in the prevention and settlement of conflicts and in ensuring sustaining peace, in line with other efforts carried out by the United Nations for gender equality and the empowerment of women, is a sine qua non to fulfil the objectives of the United Nations.

Mexico has been an active promoter of that agenda, which marked a milestone in the history of the international community, in establishing, for the first time, a comprehensive gender-based approach and the active role of women at all stages of peace processes. Although the Security Council gave decisive impetus to that agenda and vision, which was supported by Member States, society and the Secretariat, much remains to be done for its effective, coherent and cross-cutting implementation.

In terms of women's equity and participation, for instance, women still represent only 4 per cent of the military personnel deployed in peacekeeping operations and 9 per cent of the police personnel. Only 2 per cent of mediators are women, 8 per cent of the participants in negotiations are women and 5 per cent of the witnesses or signatories of peace processes have been female. Those numbers indicate the great challenges facing the international community in achieving gender equality in this area.

That is why we commend the actions of Secretary-General António Guterres to implement the gender parity strategy throughout the entire system. We call on Member States — particularly those that contribute personnel to peacekeeping operations — to increase activities to that end. Mexico has made great efforts since the resumption in 2015 of its participation as a police- and troop-contributing country to peacekeeping operations, while taking advantage of its outstanding female staff in international activities. As of today, Mexico has deployed a total of eight women belonging to its armed forces in the peace missions in Colombia, Western Sahara and Mali. Although we have managed to comply with the 15 per cent of female personnel required by the United Nations of contributing countries, Mexico reaffirms its commitment to continuing to expand the participation of female personnel. As part of the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Points Network, we recognize the importance of that interregional forum in sharing experiences and good practices, in order to advance the implementation of this agenda and identify opportunities and shortcomings.

The women and peace and security agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are faces of the same coin. The former cannot be understood without the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, which incorporate fundamental elements to improve the social situation of women. For example, to address the root causes of conflicts and sustain peace is to understand that women must have economic autonomy and the full enjoyment of their human rights. That includes receiving sufficient economic resources and employment opportunities, eradicating the feminization of poverty and guaranteeing a balance between work and personal life and the freedom to participate in decision-making within the communities in which women live and coexist, as well as other areas. States must do much more in order for our public policies to grant those circumstances to women.

The effective participation of women in all sectors of public life is fundamental. In plural, diverse and democratic societies, such as that of Mexico, the involvement of civil society organizations in matters of general interest allows for the defence of human rights and the improvement of Government policies, as well as ensuring accountability. Ensuring that organizations that safeguard women's rights participate in public institutions and processes, including in dialogue in peace processes, not only ensures the rights of women and girls, but also contributes to the goal of having a more just and peaceful society.

Without political participation, women will never achieve their considerable potential. Gender relations are often marked by an unequal distribution and exercise of power. For Mexico, reversing decades of shortcomings in terms of women's participation has been a priority objective. The results are clear: during the current legislative period, in Mexico approximately 48.8 per cent of the Chamber of Deputies will be made up of women. For its part, 49.22 per cent of the Senate of the Republic will be made up of women, going from ninth to fourth place in the world in that area.

We reaffirm our support for the Council continuing to strengthen the mandates of peace operations with provisions related to the gender perspective, including gender advisers, as well as to foster gender awareness in the analysis and review of conflicts on its agenda. We also reaffirm the importance of promoting and integrating the participation of young women and adolescents in peace processes, whereby we recognize the increasingly close link of the agenda item that we are discussing today with its counterpart for young people.

We must recall once and for all that a fair, just, calm, safe and peaceful world cannot exist without the inclusion of half of the world's population in decision-making processes. It is the responsibility of the United Nations to ensure that the women and peace and security agenda is fully implemented with a sense of urgency.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

Mr. Charwath (Austria): Let me begin by thanking Bolivia for convening this open debate on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

Austria aligns itself with the statements to be made shortly on behalf of the European Union and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security. In our national capacity, I would therefore like to highlight just a few additional points. In the interests of time, I will deliver a shortened version of our statement. The full statement will be uploaded on the PaperSmart portal.

As Austrian Foreign Minister Karin Kneissl stated in her speech to the General Assembly during its general debate at its seventy-third session (see A/73/PV.14), gender equality and the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda are about more than legal provisions. It is about the daily practice in our countries and societies. And we need to carry our work further. Eighteen years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), that is as urgent as ever. In that context, I would like to highlight three important points:

First, in our view, local grassroots organizations play a key role in advancing the women and peace and security agenda. Austria has therefore pledged €1 million to support the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. The Fund provides an opportunity to build partnerships among the United Nations, Member States and civil society to support women's organizations in building peace and in providing humanitarian responses. We are convinced that, through our financial support, we will be able to assist in boosting the activities of grass-roots organizations on the ground. We hope that others will join us in supporting that important instrument.

Secondly, Austria is convinced that the absence of violence is a prerequisite for peaceful societies. In the context of fighting gender-based violence, Austria has scaled up its engagement against female genital mutilation and in 2018 has earmarked more than €1 million to help victims of such mutilation.

Thirdly, Austria acknowledges the crucial interlinkage between human rights and conflict prevention. We therefore call on the Council to recognize the importance of the work of Women Human Rights Defenders for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Within that context, Austria supported Amnesty International in organizing a discussion on the theme "Defending Women — Defending Rights: Women Human Rights Defenders' Perspectives and Challenges" on the margins of the informal European Union Foreign Ministers' meeting in Vienna on 28 August.

Finally, let me conclude by stressing that Austria is deeply committed to the women and peace and security agenda and its implementation, continues to promote gender equality and women's political and economic empowerment and stands up for the fight against gender-based violence.

In the light of the upcoming twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), Austria acknowledges that there is still much to do to ensure the full participation of women in all phases of conflicts, including in particular in their prevention.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Favre (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to start by thanking Bolivia for having proposed this year's open debate on women and peace and security in the broader context of political and economic empowerment. The link between the women and peace and security agenda and sustaining peace has made both of them stronger and more effective. We also welcome the fact that parallel discussions continue at the regional level. That was the case last week in the context of the African Union Peace and Security Council, where the discussions focused on the crucial role women, together with men, can play in conflict prevention and peacebuilding at the grass-roots level.

Allow me also to underline that enabling women to participate effectively in peacebuilding efforts and preventing sexual violence against women, but also against men, are core objectives of Switzerland's engagement and an essential part of our recently adopted fourth national action plan on women and peace and security. Both those objectives are closely linked to the successful political and economic empowerment of women. Today I would like to focus on three aspects.

First, women, like men, must be involved in the political process from the beginning and at all levels. With Benin, we work on a project to promote women's participation in decision-making at the local level. Actions undertaken in that regard include mentoring potential female candidates for local elections and promoting the political leadership of women while raising awareness among men, including in particular husbands, and advocacy within political parties for a better positioning of women on electoral lists.

In Bangladesh, Switzerland supported a network of elected women representatives in the national Parliament and local Government councils, both by setting up a network of mentors and advocating among male elected representatives for structural change.

Secondly, women's economic empowerment is a precondition for their participation in political processes. The experiences of Switzerland's development cooperation show that prioritizing women's economic empowerment contributes effectively to conflict prevention. For example, in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, Switzerland supported communities and women to secure land rights through a certification system. In addition to promoting the economic empowerment of the people concerned, that approach has been decisive in the peaceful mediation of land disputes. In the Great Lakes region, Switzerland has also worked to improve the economic prospects of victims of sexual and gender-based violence. Self-help, savings and credit groups have been found to play a vital role in improving the economic situation of victims.

The link between women's economic empowerment and their participation in peace processes is a significant element of Switzerland's fourth national action plan on women and peace and security. We look forward to working closely with civil society organizations with a strong global network and relevant experience and hope to build on the best strategies for economic empowerment as an enabler of participation in peace processes.

My third, and final, point relates to the engagement and empowerment of men and boys in the context of gender parity. By focusing exclusively on women, we tend to forget the role of men in political and economic empowerment. Highlighting the privileges and vulnerabilities of men may be a game-changer. Thanks to the work of many champions of gender equality and the commitment of the Secretary-General to the cause, we are on the right track.

Echoing the appeal launched by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, we wish to emphasize the need for holistic action to advance the women and peace and security agenda. We again thank Bolivia for broadening the approach to that agenda and we are determined to build on the results of today's open debate.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mrs. Zappia (Italy) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to congratulate Bolivia on having convened this important open debate.

Italy aligns itself with the statements to be made by the observer of the European Union and the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends on Women, Peace and Security.

Conflict prevention begins in times of peace and must start with gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. There is indeed strong evidence that women's empowerment and gender equality lead to more peaceful and stable outcomes. By contrast, the larger the gender gap and the marginalization, exclusion and lost opportunities of women, the more likely a country is to be involved in inter- and intra-State conflict and to use violence as a first response in a conflict setting. Here I would like to present some lines of action for an enhanced commitment of the international community as a whole.

First, I will address setting the standard. We commend the fact that since the launch of the gender parity strategy, many United Nations entities have made parity commitments and now include gender parity in their performance evaluation processes. More countries are also joining the Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations, launched by the Secretary-General last year, to implement a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, and other stakeholders that are working with the United Nations now feel compelled to follow that path.

In that regard, Italy has made gender equality a central commitment of its foreign policy. Last year, we held the first-ever ministerial meeting of the Group of Seven entirely dedicated to gender. In 2018, within the framework of our Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) chairmanship, we are mainstreaming a gender perspective in all initiatives, and the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality is high on our agenda. Italy is part of the Circle of Leadership of the Secretary-General, has signed its voluntary compact, and is honoured to be the top donor to the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse perpetrated by United Nations personnel.

Secondly, we must ensure the meaningful participation of women across the peace cycle. Numbers show that we are still very far from reaching that objective. As the Secretary-General said this morning, between 1990 and 2017 women comprised only 2 per cent of mediators, 8 per cent of negotiators and 5 per cent of witnesses and signatories of peace agreements. In order to facilitate the appointment of women mediators and special envoys at the local and international levels, Italy launched the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network. The purpose of the Network is twofold — prevention and mediation on the one hand, and capacity-building on the other.

In the Mediterranean region, where migration issues are compounded by human trafficking, transnational organized crime, rising violent extremism and refugee and humanitarian emergencies, women have a major role to play in helping countries to prevent conflicts and strengthen national reconciliation processes. They do so by ensuring a gendered and inclusive perspective on issues of security, justice and governance, which are often the root causes of violent conflicts. That Network is also a concrete way for women to acquire and develop capacity and expertise to work successfully as official United Nations mediators or mediation experts. I am proud to see that some of the women mediators of our Network are here today in the Chamber.

Thirdly, in conflict situations we need effective peacekeeping operations. That can be achieved, first of all, by raising the numbers of female peacekeepers. Female peacekeepers can access populations and environments that are closed to men, and thereby improve intelligence with regard to potential security risks. Women peacekeepers improve dispute resolution, build trust with communities and are more likely to be accepted by civilians, and thereby advance stability and the rule of law.

Effective peacekeeping also requires appropriate training. That is what we do with the Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units in Vicenza, Italy, which provides high-quality training and specialized courses to peacekeepers on the rule of law, the protection of civilians, sexual and gender-based violence in conflict and the broader women and peace and security agenda.

Fourthly, I turn to accountability for violations. Unfortunately, sexual violence is still an effective weapon of war and it comes at no cost if there are no consequences to those crimes. Over the past few decades, the international community has taken progressive steps to put an end to impunity for sexual and gender-based crimes at the global level. The Rome Statute of

the International Criminal Court expressly lists various forms of sexual and gender-based crimes as underlying acts of crimes against humanity and war crimes. Also, as mentioned a few days ago in an interesting Arria Formula meeting on that topic, the Council should impose targeted sanctions against individuals who have committed sexual violence. Together with other partners, we initiated that in January 2017, when sexual and gender-based violence was included as a stand-alone designation criterion in the renewal of sanctions on the Central African Republic. Now it is up to the Council to establish sexual violence as an automatic designation criterion.

As emphasized by the Secretary-General, there is still a huge gap between commitments and reality. Women remain underrepresented, marginalized and vulnerable to the most heinous consequences of conflicts. The commitments undertaken in this Chamber and elsewhere must be translated into the financial and political support needed for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Increasing the number of women peacekeepers, achieving full parity in United Nations management positions and targeting investments in women, especially in conflict areas, are lines of action, as pointed out earlier by the Secretary-General and Executive Director Mlambo-Ngcuka, which Italy supports strongly. They pave the way for a radical change in gender culture and the meaningful participation of women, especially in decision-making processes.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to begin by sincerely thanking the Bolivian presidency of the Security Council for convening this open debate. I also thank the Secretary-General and the briefers for their valuable input.

In its various resolutions on women and peace and security, the Security Council has recognized the need to address the threats to the security of women and to protect them in conflict situations. It has also reaffirmed that women's empowerment is critical in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict situations, as well as broader efforts to maintain international peace and security.

The threats to the security of women and the need for their empowerment are the most urgent and essential demands in our volatile region, the Middle East, where women are among the main victims. The major threats to the security of women in our neighbourhood are foreign occupation, military invasion and terrorism, all of which infringe on and threaten women's rights and lives.

Foreign occupation is the most severe threat to the security of women and girls in Palestine. It is even more horrifying in the Gaza Strip, where women and their children are the main victims of a decades-long, inhumane and illegal blockade. Moreover, the long-term impacts of foreign occupation on Palestinian women in neighbouring countries, where they have suffered for decades and are still waiting to return to their ancestral land, should not be overlooked or underestimated.

Foreign invasion has had the same impact on women in Syria and certain other countries of the region, where their situation is exacerbated by the effects of terrorist activities. In such situations, air strikes, in particular on residential areas, hospitals, schools and even wedding ceremonies, mostly affect the lives of women. We share the view that women must be at the forefront of development, peace and security. However, in such an unstable region as the Middle East, there is little room for women's empowerment and development. In some societies, what women and girls look for first and foremost is to remain alive; empowerment remains a secondary priority to them.

Stopping the suffering of women, preventing their marginalization and protecting their lives can create conditions conducive to the empowerment of women and enhance their role in promoting a lasting peace in the Middle East. As a victim of aggression, foreign military invasion and terrorism, we attach great importance to the role that women can play in building a secure, stable and prosperous society.

The outstanding role of women in Iran is incontestable; for instance, they are active participants in political life and elections as both candidates and voters. Similarly, the number of women who study medicine and science in Iran now surpasses that of men. Such achievements are being made despite extremely hostile United States policies and illegal sanctions, which make no distinction between men and women, and violate the basic human rights of both, ultimately undermining the constructive role that Iranian women can play.

In conclusion, I stress that promoting the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution and in post-conflict situations is not an option, but a necessity. The realization of this noble objective is a collective responsibility, and we stand ready to contribute to any genuine international effort to achieve that end.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Ms. Schlein (Israel): Gender equality and women's empowerment comprise a core tenet of Israel's values. Israel was the first country in the world to incorporate parts of resolution 1325 (2000) into its national legislation. The fourth amendment to the women's equal rights law requires the Government to include women from all parts of society in all national policymaking teams and committees.

As part of Israel's international activities aimed at achieving women's empowerment, Israel serves as a member of the Commission on the Status of Women. Beginning next year, Israel will also serve as a member of the Executive Board of UN-Women, with which we signed an agreement in 2016 that allows for the advancement of joint projects. In addition, Israel is a member of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, headed by Canada. The group promotes, inter alia, the integration of women into decision-making forums.

Israeli efforts in the area of development and the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals is expressed by means of a variety of programmes and projects that are being promoted by MASHAV — Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation — which works with United Nations bodies to train women leaders. Already in 2003, the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Centre hosted an international conference for women leaders entitled "Women's role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding", which developed into a series of training courses. Over the past 14 years, 36 seminars on women's role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, which promote dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian women, have taken place, in which 1,075 women — Israeli and Palestinian — participated.

Some of the core elements of any successful policy-development process, particularly in the areas of peace and security, are cooperation, building partnerships, sharing experiences and creating opportunities, all of which are among the many negotiating strengths associated with women. Last year, I was honoured to be invited to join the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, a new framework initiated and supported by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Italy. This week, I am privileged to participate in the regional women mediator networks meeting here in New York, which will bring together representatives of women mediator networks from various parts of the world, United Nations officers and representatives of civil society and academia. My fellow participants bring to the table the wealth of hundreds of years of combined experience as mediators, diplomats, researchers and officers, but also as community members, mothers and sisters. This combined human wealth is incredible, creating indispensable knowledge, insights and inner strength.

Inclusiveness serves goals far beyond that of creating equal opportunities. It creates a significant new value. We need to amplify women's voices and incorporate their added value. It is not just a question of women and gender issues; it is a question of peace and security.

Scientific research has demonstrated a strong correlation between inclusiveness and the sustainability of peace agreements. In an article published in August, Jana Krause of the University of Amsterdam and her colleagues show that women's active participation in peace negotiations leads to better accord content, higher agreement-implementation rates and longer-lasting peace. Their statistical results show a robust relationship between peace agreements with women signatories and peace durability. They further found that peace agreements signed by women show a significantly higher number of agreement provisions and a higher implementation rate of such provisions than those not signed by women. Women's direct participation in negotiations therefore improves both accord quality and provision-implementation rates. As an illustration, they found a higher rate of provision implementation 10 years after agreements were signed, as compared to agreements not signed by women. Those findings were substantiated with qualitative case-study evidence derived from looking into decades of peace processes and agreements.

Resolution 1325 (2000) calls for greater representation of women in national decision-making, especially in the areas of conflict prevention and resolution. Yet, unfortunately, the voices of women are still excluded from most peace-negotiation tables. It is our collective duty to take concrete steps to get women

seats at the table. We can no longer afford to exclude the talents and insights of half the population in the pursuit of peace.

We need a more inclusive approach to peace and security and a broader gender perspective — a shift in paradigms and perceptions of and attitudes towards women's participation. If we want a better future, we need to adopt a new value-based approach and lobby for inclusive peace processes. We need to open the doors and provide women with access to decision-making, negotiations and the actual table. That is the only way forward. Let us all work together towards access and seats at the table for women.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Ms. Marinaki: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes Bolivia's initiative to focus today's discussion on the political and economic aspects of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. We join the Secretary-General in calling on Member States to build the necessary gender advisory capacity in order to systematically integrate a gender perspective in all analyses, planning, conduct and evaluation of United Nations activities, including in peacekeeping missions. The European Union focuses on four main priorities within the women and peace and security agenda.

First, we put emphasis on our efforts aimed at increasing women's political participation and leadership. The following are just a few examples. In Afghanistan, the European Union has been providing training and coaching to female members of the Afghan High Peace Council, thereby enabling them to play an active role in the peace agreement between the Government of Afghanistan and Hizb-e-Islami. In Syria, the European Union and its member States have been supporting the Syrian Women's Advisory Board established by Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura. In Mali, the Follow-up and Evaluation Committee overseeing the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement, including the relevant gender-equality and women and peace and security commitments, has also been supported by the European Union. Furthermore, in March 2018, in Turkey, the European Union launched the Gaziantep Women's Platform — a network of women involved in the Geneva peace process consisting of activists and non-governmental organization representatives active in Syria — to address issues related to women's empowerment, women's rights and sexual and gender-based violence.

Secondly, we have prioritized action against sexual and gender-based violence in conflict. We continue to support United Nations efforts to combat conflict-related sexual violence. In that context, the European Union has taken concrete action in committing to working together with the United Nations to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls worldwide, through the Spotlight Initiative. We would like to ask other stakeholders to join us in helping to promote the women and peace and security agenda by aligning our efforts to ensure the security and safety of all women and girls. Since June 2017 the European Union has been chairing a worldwide initiative, the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies. We have also systematically followed up on our commitments to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, whom we fully support in her excellent work.

Thirdly, we have prioritized the promotion of proactive policies for women's economic empowerment, which will also generate sizeable returns for our economies and societies. In January 2018, the European Union, together with UN-Women and the International Labour Organization, launched WE EMPOWER, a programme promoting women's economic empowerment at work through responsible business in the countries of the Group of Seven, designed to advance women's economic empowerment by creating an enabling environment where the active engagement of the corporate sector combines with public-policy efforts.

Fourthly, we have prioritized strengthening the national frameworks for implementing the women and peace and security agenda in European Union member States, such as national action plans and similar strategic documents. While the European Union can point to a number of success stories through the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions,

and while 20 of the 28 European Union member States have their own national action plans, there is still much to be done. We are happy to report that we are in the final stages of adopting our new European Union policy — the European Union strategic approach on women and peace and security — before the end of the year. The European Union is working constantly to improve its procedures and practices in its civilian and military missions and operations. We have enhanced the role of our European Union gender focal points network in order to increase exchanges of best practices in real time. We have also been investing a great deal of effort in further reinforcing our partnerships with civil society.

We recognize the crucial role of UN-Women, together with that of other relevant stakeholders, in helping our common efforts. Together with other regional organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, NATO and the African Union, we will continue our joint commitment to integrating a stronger gender dimension into all peace and security efforts. We welcome and engage in all initiatives that help strengthen those efforts, such as the Global Network of Gender Focal Points, the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network and the Women Mediators Networks.

Finally, in view of the upcoming twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) in 2020, the European Union reiterates its commitment to helping all United Nations efforts for an even faster and more ambitious implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. The United Nations can rely on our unwavering support, not just in New York but across the globe.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium of course fully aligns itself with the statement just made by the observer of the the European Union, and I would like to add the following observations in my national capacity.

First, we would like to begin by congratulating Dr. Denis Mukwege and Ms. Nadia Murad Basee Taha, who were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of their fight against sexual violence as a weapon of war. Belgium has been fortunate enough to work closely with both Dr. Mukwege and Ms. Murad and remains firmly committed to supporting their cause.

The women and peace and security agenda has been one of the pillars of our foreign policy for almost 20 years and will therefore also be an important priority during our forthcoming term on the Security Council for the next two years. It is essential that we continue to translate the Council's resolutions into concrete action.

Belgium shares the view of the Secretary-General on the importance of women's active participation in conflict prevention and resolution. That is why we advocate for more women at the negotiating table, in peace processes and mediation efforts — in Syria and Yemen, for example — as well as in elections. Peace agreements and processes that take into account women's voices and examine the impact of conflict on women are more sustainable in the long term, as many speakers before me have said. Women must be more involved so that they can become agents for peace in their communities and countries. In that regard, we would like to recommend some concrete actions.

First, the Council itself should listen more carefully to the voices of women, for example by increasing the number of statements by representatives of women's organizations during Council discussions on peacekeeping operations, and by meeting with women's organizations during the Council's country visits. Secondly, we need more women in peacekeeping operations and in security-sector reform. We must also continue to support gender advisers under current mandates. Thirdly, we must encourage women's participation in peace processes and agreements and consider how to involve them at an earlier stage of the process. Belgium hosted a seminar in April devoted to the issue in collaboration with the African Union.

Finally, we can all act at the national level. Belgium is currently implementing its third national action plan on women and peace and security. An example of concrete action within its framework is our support for a five-year civil-society programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on women's participation in conflict-resolution mechanisms.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Czech Republic.

Mrs. Chatardová (Czech Republic): The Czech Republic aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the observer of the European Union and that to be delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

It is clear that there is a well-established link between peace and women's political and economic empowerment. The women and peace and security agenda has broadened since its launch nearly 20 years ago, and it is no longer solely concerned with women's physical security. Increasingly, the necessity for women's participation in public and economic affairs has become a frequent topic of discussion at both the national and international level. Despite all the progress, however, increasing the number of women who participate meaningfully in this area requires human resources, sufficient funds, a recognition of the value that women's involvement brings and the political will to push against stereotypes and negative social norms. We, the Member States, must take the initiative and incorporate the effective, swift and thorough implementation of the women and peace and security agenda into all our endeavours, along with holding the United Nations accountable for including it in all its activities.

We are proud to say that the Czech Republic has made some concrete steps towards those goals. We are currently implementing our first national action plan on women and peace and security for the period from 2017 to 2020. The plan contains specific measurable tasks and sets out concrete steps. These include increasing the number of women in decision-making positions in politics and in the security forces, achieving work-balance and ending all forms of discrimination against women, girls, men and boys as a violation of human rights.

We believe in a participative approach to our national action plan. Therefore, we are cooperating closely with academics on reviewing our current plan to provide for the creation of an even more effective document for the upcoming period. In that context, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage countries that have not yet done so to adopt a national action plan, a uniquely effective tool in implementing the women and peace and security agenda at the national and international levels.

The right to participate in public affairs is a key human right that enables the enjoyment of a number of other rights. Its effective implementation is also crucial for the achievement by all countries of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Czech Republic therefore selected Goal 16, which includes the target "to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels", as the priority theme of our presidency of the Economic and Social Council in 2017 and 2018.

My country also backs up its words with practical action. The Czech Republic actively addresses the root causes of inequality by implementing projects aimed at the economic empowerment and equal participation of women. Such projects are being implemented in Georgia, Zambia, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. We are also a lead nation of the Jordan III Trust Fund, a capacity-building project aimed at supporting servicewomen in the Jordanian armed forces.

At the outset of our recent successful campaign for membership in the Human Rights Council, we pledged to continue challenging stereotypes in society and creating equal opportunities for women and men. Let me assure you, Mr. President, that the Czech Republic remains committed to those pledges in all its activities and will support the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda across United Nations initiatives.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations.

Archbishop Auza (Holy See): The Holy See extends to the presidency of the Plurinational State of Bolivia its appreciation for convening this open debate on the important theme of women and peace and security. Women, as Pope Francis has said, "have the great gift of being able to give life, being able to give tenderness, being able to give peace and joy". When women have the opportunity to pass on their gifts to the entire community, society is inevitably transformed to better reflect the human family. Women are at the forefront of what Pope Francis called the "revolution of tenderness", which the world urgently needs.

Women offer an important contribution to dialogue with their capacity to listen, to welcome and to open themselves generously to others. Women are often the first ones to assist others, especially the weakest in the family and in society, yet they also pay the very high cost of enduring the consequences of conflicts.

Resolution 1325 (2000) remains a significant instrument that stresses the equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the promotion of peace and security. Dialogue and political engagement are in fact a journey that men and women must undertake together. The Holy See, which often

participates in mediation efforts among the parties involved in various violent conflicts throughout the world, has been pleased to see the leadership of women during those processes.

Women and girls in conflict situations suffer the trauma of war. They can be all-too-easy targets to humiliate and inflict pain on the enemy. The Holy See strongly condemns in particular the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and calls on Member States and non-State actors always to defend women and girls, and all innocent civilians caught in the crossfire.

The Catholic Church, especially through the activities of its many courageous religious sisters and volunteers, has always defended the dignity and human rights of those enduring conflicts and humanitarian emergencies by providing physical protection as well as moral and spiritual support; working with police and border-control agents; facilitating access to justice and humanitarian aid; helping to fight arbitrary detention; assisting with access to housing, emergency health care and education in many cases when there is no one else to provide such basic services; and mediating tensions with host communities.

The Holy See supports the efforts being made to ensure that each woman benefits from assistance when it is needed. However, while acknowledging the particular risks that women and children face in the context of humanitarian emergencies and their specific and integral needs regarding access to basic health care, essential obstetric services, sanitary services and food security, the Holy See cannot accept as a fitting solution those services that promote and provide abortion, such as those included in the minimum initial service package for reproductive health.

Humanitarian law and related programmes are established as measures to support life and to save the lives of those who find themselves in critical situations. Thus humanitarian aid should never be envisaged as operating, or actually operate, against the right to life; abortion is never a safe solution. The youngest members of the human family cannot be discriminated against based on emergency situations of migration, conflict or disaster. As Pope Francis has emphasized,

> "Human beings are ends in themselves and never a means of resolving other problems. Once this conviction disappears, so do solid and lasting foundations for the defence of human rights".

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ghana.

Mrs. Pobee (Ghana): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 61 members of the Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network to the United Nations.

The Group of Friends expresses its appreciation to the Bolivian presidency of the Security Council for convening this debate on the important agenda on women and peace and security. The Group also thanks the Secretary-General for his report (S/2018/900) on this issue, which captures the challenges as well as the opportunities presented to Member States and stakeholders in the global effort to prevent conflict and sustain peace from an enhanced gender-sensitive perspective.

The briefings provided by the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, and Randa Siniora Atallah are also deeply appreciated. The African Women Leaders Network was launched in New York in June 2017 with a view to bolstering women's leadership for transformative change in Africa. The vision of the Network is inspired by the women and peace and security agenda, and seeks to increase women's access to decision-making processes and leadership positions in view of their exceptional contributions to sustaining peace and development in Africa.

The Network counts more than 300 women leaders, operationalizing key strategic instruments for the implementation of the peace, security and development agenda. In a bid to support this ground-breaking effort, a cross-regional Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network was established last February under the leadership of the Permanent Missions of Ghana and Germany to serve as a strategic platform and provide political support for the Network at United Nations Headquarters and beyond. We are committed to making the message of women's political and economic empowerment a central theme in the maintenance of international peace and security, conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

We wish to focus our statement on three main areas.

First, we support the renewed efforts made in the past year to include practical actions for improved implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, and we welcome in that regard the convening

of meetings of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security to explore gender dimensions in major conflict areas around the world, particularly in Mali and the Sahel, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Lake Chad basin and the Central African Republic.

The Group commends in that regard the pioneering leadership of Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed; the Executive Director of UN-Women; and the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security, who took the practical step of embarking on joint African Union-United Nations fact-finding missions to the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria in 2017, and subsequently to Chad, the Niger and South Sudan this year. The invaluable exchanges with women in communities during the course of those joint missions represent an innovation that will intensify efforts towards the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and significantly bring to the fore the voices of women and girls silenced by the consequences of conflicts and war. We also commend the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Ms. Margot Wallström, who joined the Chad and Niger legs of the mission.

Secondly, the Group of Friends reiterates its full support for efforts by the Secretary-General to increase women's participation in peacekeeping and United Nations peace operations, including political missions in Africa. Member States must support and complement those efforts to prevent stagnation and a possible decrease in the level of representation of women in those missions. The Group adopted a strategic plan of action last September to support women's leadership and participation in peace processes on the ground. The plan includes training and support for women as mediators and chiefs of operations in order to ensure a qualitative increase in the number of women in police and military contingents of United Nations peacekeeping missions.

Thirdly, we believe that it is essential to develop closer partnerships in support of the women and peace and security agenda at the local, national and regional levels. The Group of Friends firmly believes that the African Women Leaders Network provides an excellent framework for developing such viable relationships, which will bolster the implementation of peace efforts, especially at the local level. The women belonging to the Network have already demonstrated their ability and potential to create and to foster innovative mechanisms to boost efforts to achieve durable peace and development. Consequently, they must be fully supported in assuming their rightful place as co-drivers of the peace, security, development, governance and economic structures established during and after conflicts.

The African Women Leaders Network is working towards women's participation in decision-making processes at the local level through the establishment of national chapters. I am pleased to inform the Council that national chapters in the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been established with the support and collaboration of the African Union and UN-Women. We recognize that women are already engaged and are ready to play their role in building and sustaining peace. We need more of them at the decision-making table. We need more women participating in prevention and mediation and on negotiating teams. It is our responsibility to make that happen in the shortest possible time through our continued engagement and support.

I now have the honour to make the following brief remarks in my national capacity.

Ghana continues to take the necessary measures to address structural barriers that impede women's political participation, economic empowerment and role in decision-making. Recent achievements in that regard include the appointment of women to key positions in Cabinet, the military and law enforcement agencies and justice institutions, as well as peacebuilding and conflict-prevention institutions.

We are also one of the 23 African countries that have developed national action plans for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The Government is currently in the process of formulating our national action plan in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders. In so doing, it is addressing the challenges and gaps experienced in the first action plan, such as the lack of adequate funding, effective localization, monitoring and evaluation.

Within the framework of the Economic Community of West African States regional action plan, Ghana continues to contribute to subregional efforts in favour of the women and peace and security agenda. The Women, Peace and Security Institute at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre is very instrumental in those efforts. Prior to the elections in Liberia, the Institute conducted election observation

training for 25 female staff of the Liberia Peacebuilding Office, as well as capacity-building for selected eminent women in conflict analysis, mediation and negotiation.

We share the view that the low levels of political participation of women prior to conflict, coupled with poverty, food insecurity, disparity and deprivation, remain critical factors that impede women's political participation and role in conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding. We must therefore address the various dimensions of women's empowerment, which include economic, social, psychological and political empowerment.

In conclusion, we wish to state that much has been achieved but much more remains to be done. It is our hope that Member States will continue to demonstrate their commitment to the women and peace and security agenda in concrete terms, especially in conflict-prone regions of the world, including Africa, where significant challenges persist.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mrs. Bernal Prado (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Bolivian delegation for convening this debate, which highlights the importance of the role that women play in conflict prevention and resolution through their political and economic empowerment and greater representation in decision-making levels related to international peace and security.

Chile aligns itself with the statement to be made by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security and reiterates its commitment to the promotion and rights of women in situations of armed conflict, as well as to the initiatives of the Secretary-General to promote gender equality in the United Nations system.

Resolution 1325 (2000) is a symbolic resolution of the Security Council, since it deals with one of the most tragic consequences of modern conflicts, namely, violence against women and girls during conflicts. We therefore welcome the fact that, to date, 76 members of the international community, including Chile, have put in place national plans of action for the implementation of the resolution. We express our hope that more countries will proceed to adopt their own national plans.

The issue of women and peace and security is one of the priority areas of Chile's multilateral foreign policy. For that reason, we have promoted the strengthening of regional and global cooperation in that area by working on the implementation of public policies that ensure women's participation in all processes to implement resolution 1325 (2000) at the national level. Chile was the first country in the region to develop a national action plan in 2009 for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). That action plan was the result of coordinated work by an interministerial committee made up of the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Women and Gender Equity and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also highlighting the participation of civil society in its preparation. The second national action plan was launched in 2015, reflecting the recommendations of the Security Council and relevant international good practices and emphasizing education, staff training and the inclusion of quantitative indicators.

Currently, our country is focused on the development of a third-generation plan for 2019-2022, with a view to strengthening the role of women in negotiation, mediation, peacemaking and peacebuilding. The areas of monitoring, evaluation and accountability will also be included in its objectives and budgetary allocations so as to ensure adequate implementation. The interministerial committee is working on expanding the scope of action to natural disasters, humanitarian assistance and the displacement of people, with the active collaboration of civil society and other institutions.

In the context of the process of developing our third action plan, our country is facing the challenge of increasing the percentage of women in peace operations and in leadership and decision-making positions and of ensuring the presence of gender advisors in those operations.

The promotion and protection of resolution 1325 (2000) continues to be part of our national and collective responsibilities. The same is true of achieving the effective inclusion of women in all political, economic, social and cultural processes that our societies face.

It is our hope that the award of this year's Nobel Peace Prize to Nadia Murad and Dr. Denis Mukwege for their efforts to end sexual violence as a weapon of war in armed conflict will inspire the Security Council and the international community to redouble their efforts to comply with the resolution.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Blanchard (Canada): First, I would like to say how happy, delightful and inspiring it was for us to learn of the appointment of the new President of Ethiopia this morning. We want to congratulate our friends from Ethiopia on the appointment of President Sahle-Work Zewde by the Parliament. It is not only an exceptional appointment, but also an inspiration for the entire world. We continue to salute what is being done in Ethiopia and throughout the world, and specifically in Africa, for the leadership and empowerment of women. As I said, it is an inspiration for the entire world.

I am pleased to speak today on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, an informal network of 54 interested Member States, chaired by Canada, representing all five regional groups at the United Nations.

The Group warmly congratulates Nadia Murad and Denis Mukwege on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to end the use sexual violence as a tactic of war and armed conflict. Let that be an inspiration to the United Nations and all Member States that prompts them to redouble their efforts to end sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict by ending impunity, strengthening compliance with international humanitarian law, bringing perpetrators to justice, reinforcing preventive measures, including through Security Council sanctions, and providing comprehensive assistance to survivors. We must ensure that the stigma of sexual violence falls upon the perpetrators of such acts and not on the survivors.

The Group applauds the focus on women's political and economic empowerment at this year's open debate. The linkage between women's empowerment and peace and security is at the core of the women and peace and security agenda. When societies achieve higher levels of gender equality, they are less susceptible to armed conflict. When women are included in peace processes, peace agreements are more likely to be reached and are more likely to endure. Women play an indispensable role in peacekeeping. Their full and meaningful participation at all levels is key to the operational effectiveness of missions. Women's economic empowerment is an integral and often overlooked conflict-prevention and conflict-recovery strategy. Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls are central to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and to sustaining peace. The Group strongly believes that *efforts to achieve gender equality are not a detraction* from peace and security efforts; they are a foundation of peace.

In the light of such facts, the persistent absence of women's meaningful participation in peace and security efforts should remain a matter of heightened concern for the Security Council. As was thoroughly documented in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/900), despite women playing instrumental roles in efforts to prevent and resolve conflict, they remain consistently underrepresented in efforts to negotiate peaceful political resolutions and peace agreements. In the past quarter century, women constituted only 2 per cent of mediators, 8 per cent of negotiators and 5 per cent of witnesses and signatories in all major peace processes. The consequences of the continued absence of women are compounded over time, as gender-blind peace agreements can exacerbate gender inequalities in post-conflict societies.

Women's meaningful economic and political participation demands the early involvement of women in key decision-making roles at all levels, the addressing of the full scope of women's and girls' human rights and gender equality and the inclusion of gender expertise and analysis in all stages of the conflict cycle. As the *Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security* emphasized, we must also invest in young women's capacities, agency and leadership and address the structural barriers limiting youth participation — and particularly the participation of young women — in peace efforts. We must work together to recognize and actively address obstacles to meaningful women's participation, whether they be cultural, structural or institutional in nature. We must also strengthen the capacity of women to participate in peace and security efforts, including through political, logistical and financial support. Finally, we must confront the systems of violence and intimidation that prevent women of all ages from attaining full equality in their societies.

The Group welcomes recent efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General to enhance women's participation at the United Nations. That includes the implementation of a system-wide gender-parity strategy and, notably, the realization of gender parity, both in the Senior Management Group and among resident coordinators. The Group also welcomes the continued exchange of best practices through the Women, Peace, and Security Focal Points Network and the creation of women

mediator networks to enhance women's influence in peace processes.

While the Security Council itself has yet to achieve gender balance, the Group welcomes efforts undertaken by members of the Council to more systematically include women in its work. That includes the establishment of the Informal Experts Group, the encouragement to all briefers to mainstream gender analysis in their interventions, the integration and strengthening of women and peace and security provisions in resolutions, presidential statements and press statements, meeting with women's groups during Council field visits and increasing the number of women civil-society briefers outside the debate on women and peace and security. We encourage Council members to continue to build upon such best practices. At the same time, more needs to be done to fully implement the existing resolutions, reinforce the follow-up and monitor the progress made.

Finally, as we approach the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) in 2020, the Group calls on all stakeholders to expand their efforts to realize all four pillars of the women and peace and security agenda, including prevention, participation, protection and post-conflict recovery. While much has been achieved since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we are far from realizing the transformational potential of women's equality and meaningful economic and political participation for peace and development.

I would like to make a few additional remarks in a national capacity.

Resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted when Canada was last on the Security Council. Since then, important progress has been made in implementing the women and peace and security agenda, including through the adoption and renewal of an increasing number of national action plans. However, too many gaps remain. It is up to the Security Council and individual Member States to take concrete actions.

There is no quick fix. It will not be enough to add a woman mediator here or a gender adviser there. Structural, political, economic and social gender-discrimination exists in all of our countries. Conflict only exacerbates those inequalities. Long-term measures and sustained investments of our time and resources are required to achieve transformative results.

Canada is taking such measures. We are examining how our national action plan on women and peace and security can better address the violence and discrimination faced by indigenous women and girls in Canada. Internationally, Canada's feminist foreign policy demands that our approach to diplomacy, trade, security and development fully take into account the needs of women and girls in all their diversity. We are doing so because we know the impact is greater, the results more sustained and the benefits more widespread. It is a conscious decision to be more effective.

We also recognize that being more effective means working together with others in the pursuit of peace. Following the launch of our second national action plan last year, we increased our efforts to advance the women and peace and security agenda in all forums — including those where women and peace and security has not traditionally been at the forefront. Throughout our Group of Seven (G-7) presidency, Canada has promoted gender equality. We launched the G-7 Women, Peace and Security Partnerships Initiative, which aims to increase women and peace and security implementation in partnership countries. We are so pleased to be partnering with Côte d'Ivoire on that important initiative.

As a long-standing promoter and defender of the multilateral system, Canada stands ready to improve it. Recognizing that progress to date has been too slow, Canada launched the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations to increase the meaningful participation of uniformed women in United Nations peace operations. To that end, Canada is establishing partnerships with the Ghana armed forces and the Zambia police service.

Canada believes that we have a lot to learn from others and from one another. Just last month, Canada, together with the European Union, hosted a meeting of women Foreign Ministers in Montreal for a discussion on current challenges to global peace and security. At that meeting, Canada's Foreign Minister announced that our Government will be appointing a women and peace and security ambassador to strengthen the implementation of our action plan. The Minister also announced that Canada will be co-hosting the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network with Uruguay in 2020 — the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000).

(*spoke in French*)

We salute women around the world who bravely share their personal experiences of conflict and who take action at the local, regional and international levels. They remind us that the women and peace and security agenda is not just a normative issue to be discussed in New York, it has a genuine impact on a global scale. I would like to recognize the important work being carried out by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Nadia Murad in raising awareness about sexual violence in conflict. When she visited Canada in October 2016, she challenged Canadian legislators, Government officials and civil society to do more to advance the women and peace and security agenda. It is one of the reasons that her photo is on the cover of our national action plan on women and peace and security.

In order to do their important work, local women peacebuilders need resources. Last year, Canada doubled its support to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund. We encourage other countries to support that fund, which seeks to strengthen women's meaningful participation in peace and security efforts.

Canada supports efforts in the Council to mainstream the women and peace and security agenda in all of the Council's work. If elected to the Security Council for the period 2021-2022, members can rest assured that Canada will continue to champion the women and peace and security agenda. We will seek opportunities to create and support transformative solutions to gender-based issues in conflict situations. We will defend women's voices and human rights. We will challenge narratives that undermine women's ability to contribute, lead and shape solutions. We will continue to work together with civil society, Member States and the United Nations to help reinvigorate the implementation of this important agenda.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 10 member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and my own country, Viet Nam.

We express our sincere thanks to the Bolivian presidency for convening this important debate. We also extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women Executive and the other briefers for their insightful statements.

ASEAN member States share the view that women's equal, full and effective participation is of great importance at all stages of peace processes, given their necessary role in the prevention and resolution of conflict, peacebuilding and peacekeeping, as embodied in resolution 1325 (2000) and many subsequent resolutions. In that regard, we are pleased to inform the Council that, in November 2017, ASEAN leaders adopted a joint statement on promoting women and peace and security in ASEAN. In that statement we encouraged the integration of a gender perspective in all conflict prevention initiatives and strategies, which must ensure the full participation of women in peace processes as well as encourage the inclusion of the women and peace and security agenda in policies and programmes for the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence before, during and after armed conflict. That also includes the creation of greater and wider spaces for participation in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction processes.

While welcoming the positive progress achieved in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, we all see that challenges persist. Women continue to be excluded from, and underrepresented in, peacebuilding and negotiation processes. Violence, intimidation, discrimination and gender stereotypes, inter alia, impede women's engagement and contributions. In the face of that reality, Member States, United Nations entities, the relevant international and regional organizations and other stakeholders need to redouble their efforts to promote women's empowerment and increase women's involvement in economic and political spheres, particularly in decision-making processes. Such efforts may include, but are not limited to, awareness-raising, capacity-building, education, training and the exchange of best practices.

Within the United Nations system, ASEAN looks forward to greater recruitment and promotion of women from developing countries, so that gender parity and equitable geographical representation can advance hand in hand. At the regional level, ASEAN is fully committed to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment as a means of contributing to long-lasting peace and prosperity. We have continued to adopt a wide range of frameworks in that regard. In

2017, ASEAN leaders adopted the Action Agenda on Mainstreaming Women's Economic Empowerment. Among other things, the Agenda will address the barriers that impede efforts to maximize women's full economic potential, increase women's representation and leadership roles in the workforce and encourage public and private-sector collaboration to create more opportunities for women in business.

ASEAN attaches high importance to gender-mainstreaming across all three pillars, namely, the political-security, economic and socio-cultural pillars. The ASEAN Declaration on the Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the Sustainable Development Goals reflect our high-level political commitment to ensuring the realization of a people-oriented and people-centred ASEAN, where all women and girls are able to reach their fullest potential. To that end, ASEAN member States will intensify efforts to promote women's leadership and economic empowerment; eliminate gender-stereotyping and violence against women and protect and empower women in vulnerable situations. At the national level, ASEAN member States have made great efforts to increase public spending and investment in social services, notably on education and health, which serve to address the gender inequality gap and contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth in the region.

ASEAN also gives high priority to strengthening collaboration and collective efforts with international and regional partners on promoting the role of women in building and sustaining peace. On that note, we welcome the fourth annual ASEAN-United Nations Regional Dialogue on Political-Security Cooperation, held under the theme "Women, Peace and Security — The Role of Women in the Prevention of Violent Extremism". In addition, ASEAN, in partnership with UN-Women, launched the ASEAN HeForShe campaign in conjunction with the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign. The campaign seeks to raise awareness about gender equality in the ASEAN region, promote a culture of respect for women and girls and mobilize the participation of men and boys as advocates for gender equality.

We face increasing and unprecedented threats in today's world. Peace and security are essential to the achievement of sustainable development. As partners in development, peace and security, women play an indispensable role at all stages of peace processes, from conflict prevention and resolution to post-conflict recovery and sustaining peace. In that regard, ASEAN renews its commitments and will work closely with other Member States, the United Nations and regional organizations to further advance the women and peace and security agenda at the global, regional and national levels.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this debate today. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UN-Women and Ms. Siniora Atallah for their very important messages to us today.

I am speaking before the Security Council today because this issue matters deeply to my country, Ireland. In fact, I am speaking because we owe a great deal to women in Ireland, particularly northern Ireland, where women helped make peace possible on our island after decades of violent conflict. This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, the result of a peace process in which women played a critical role on the streets, in community groups and at the negotiation table in bringing about sustainable peace. I am very proud that one of those negotiators is here with me today and that she has been so willing to share her experience and expertise with women peacebuilders across the globe.

Ireland welcomes the focus of the Secretary-General's report this year (S/2018/900) on women's meaningful participation in negotiating peace. Meaningful is the operative word. We have long moved beyond gestures and symbols. We know that we need hands-on, influential roles for women in which they can make the critical life-and-death differences in ending conflict and building peace.

It is now almost a cliche to say that women's participation significantly increases the probability of sustainable peace. What is shocking, however, is that this reality is so little respected globally. Ireland believes that we have a duty to change that — we have an obligation to work to support women's leadership and empowerment across the development and peacebuilding nexus. We take that duty seriously.

Ireland's international development policy seeks to strengthen the voices of women and girls in decision-making at all levels. We are proud to actively

support and, indeed, advocate for greater roles for civil-society organizations. We know that women's voices are louder at the civil-society and local grass-roots levels. We want to see the volume turned up. Women are gifted in mediation and peacebuilding. We want to see that capacity leveraged. With that in mind, my country is a founding member and core donor to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

Ireland welcomes the increase in the number of female and civil-society briefers at the Security Council. We believe other voices should be heard here. In that regard, today is a good day. We also support calls for stronger gender analysis across the Council's entire agenda of work, including in its reporting from mission visits.

To echo the Secretary-General's welcome report, peacekeeping operations and uniformed personnel remain the most visible representatives of the United Nations worldwide, working directly with communities. Ireland's Defence Forces have an unbroken record of 60 years of participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions. Peacekeeping is a part of the DNA of the Irish nation; we often say that we are as proud of the blue beret as we are of the shamrock. In the Irish Defence Forces, we have a dedicated and ambitious action plan on women and peace and security. It has started to show results.

Preparations for Ireland's third national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000) are now in full swing. We are engaging Government, civil society and academia across the country. At the top of our agenda are issues such as preventing violent extremism, listening to the experiences of migrants and refugees and considering the important question of masculinity. Ireland was very pleased to host the second regional acceleration of resolution 1325 (2000) in Dublin earlier this year, collaborating with our European partners on the women and peace and security agenda.

I am currently the proud Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women. In addition to the work I have mentioned, Ireland fully supports today's focus on women's political and economic empowerment. We believe that our calls for women's equal participation in politics must be matched by our calls for women's equal participation in society and the economy. We also want to see an end to the structural barriers that limit women's political and economic empowerment. In the Commission on the Status of Women, we are acutely aware of how many insidious barriers there are to that empowerment and how deep-rooted they are. Ireland is working with the Commission on the Status of Women to overcome them.

As Ireland looks to celebrate 100 years of women's suffrage in December, we also look ahead to the brilliant young women waiting in the wings. Ireland is a strong advocate of the youth, peace and security agenda. We must not perpetuate the cycle of violence by leaving young women out of the debate. We also need to engage young men, as they are just as important as young women in implementing the women and peace and security agenda, one that we care deeply about in Ireland. If Ireland is elected to the Security Council for the period 2021-2022, I think the Council will find a courageous and, if I may say so, feisty advocate for women and peace and security in the Irish delegation.

In conclusion, as Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women, I am professionally and personally deeply committed to realizing the true transformative potential of women and girls. As Mary Robinson, the first-elected female President of Ireland recognized, the hand that rocks the cradle can also rock the system.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): We live in a world where violence, inequality and injustice are obstacles to peace. Global military spending amounts to $1.6 trillion, and therefore greatly exceeds global health spending — $37.6 billion — let alone global education spending, at $6.8 billion. Gender equality helps prevent conflict, and women's voices are particularly relevant in the field of peace and security. Ironically, the budget of the global women's rights movement is less than the cost of two F-35 fighter planes. Past decades have brought some progress in reducing gender inequality. Yet women's economic and political empowerment remains one of the major challenges of our time. We welcome that today's open debate is dedicated to that important topic.

Women human rights defenders, political leaders, justice and security-sector actors, peacekeepers and mediators, journalists, activists and civil-society leaders all significantly contribute to a more peaceful, sustainable and prosperous world. Yet, in order to enable women to be agents of change, we need to create an environment that is enabling and free of discrimination, unfair social norms and attitudes, and

does not deprive them of their rights and opportunities. We welcome progress in integrating gender perspectives and promoting women's meaningful participation and representation in the Organization's work on conflict prevention, conflict resolution and sustaining peace, including in mediation teams and leadership positions.

There is evidence linking gender inequality and gender-based violence to the greater vulnerability of societies to civil and inter-State war. Sexual and gender-based violence is highly prevalent in conflict situations and continues to be used as a weapon of war. Harmful gender stereotypes and abusive power dynamics form the basis on which systemic and widespread sexual violence can thrive. We are particularly concerned about the devastating trend of conflict-related sexual violence, with 800 cases documented by the United Nations last year, amounting to a 56 per cent increase from 2016. In the past year and up until July 2018, the Human Rights Council received reports from independent human rights investigations in Burundi, the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen that document grave endemic sexual and gender-based violence, including sexualized torture, rape and mutilation of sexual organs.

Women and girls have been disproportionately affected. However, there are also numerous men and boys among the victims. A recently published report by the All Survivors Project documents the use of rape and other forms of sexual violence and torture by Syrian authorities and associated militias against male detainees. Sexual violence against men and boys continues to be underreported, owing to cultural taboos and the fear of being stigmatized. Only if we understand the underlying factors of those crimes — irrespective of the victim's gender — can we find comprehensive and sustainable solutions for all.

Accountability is an essential part of the fight against conflict-related sexual violence. International criminal-justice mechanisms — including the International Criminal Court, which reflects the very progressive stance on sexual and gender-based violence enshrined in the Rome Statute, adopted 20 years ago — have done ground-breaking work. The accountability mechanism for Syria has supported investigations into sexual violence and gender-based crimes. We have high hopes for the accountability mechanism newly established for Myanmar by the Human Rights Council to investigate sexual and gender-based violence committed against the Rohingya and other minorities, and we value the work of Justice Rapid Response aimed at strengthening accountability.

However, justice, peace and equality remain utopian concepts for many women and girls around the world. There are still discriminatory laws and practices that prevent them from enjoying full and equal protection under the law and from achieving just outcomes for violations of their human rights. Structural inequalities, poverty and discrimination in both conflict and non-conflict contexts reduce the opportunities for women and girls to be informed of their rights and to access justice before, during and after conflict. Women remain unevenly represented in transitional justice and rule-of-law institutions. Only if we address those disparities can we achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, on gender equality, SDG 10, on reduced inequalities, and SDG 16,, on peace, justice and strong institutions, all of which are not merely end goals in themselves but also preconditions for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a whole.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Paraguay.

Mr. Arriola Ramírez (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of the Republic of Paraguay is grateful for the briefings delivered on the topic under discussion and commends the Bolivian presidency of the Security Council for promoting the relevance of the agenda on women and peace and security. I will present the Paraguayan delegation's contribution to the debate from three perspectives, that is, the principles that inspire our country, the actions that we carry out at the national level for the political and economic empowerment of women, and our vision regarding the role of the United Nations and the Security Council with regard to women and peace and security.

First of all, on the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we recall that the shared ideal of peoples and nations is full respect for those rights and freedoms and their universal and effective recognition and implementation, without distinction. In that regard, our 1992 Constitution guarantees equality between men and women with respect to civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights, and the Government of Paraguay works to promote women as a factor for change in the country, generating conditions of equity, equality and empowerment. The responsibility to protect the population, especially

women and girls and the most vulnerable population groups, rests principally with States. Initiatives for the political and economic empowerment of women in situations of conflict must be framed within the efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Regarding our actions that we consider relevant to this debate, in Paraguay the Ministry of Women promotes and implements public policies with a gender perspective and promotes the full exercise of women's human rights, mainly through the 2018-2023 national plan for equal opportunities for women and men. Ciudad Mujer, an exclusive centre for women and their children, offers an array of 80 interconnected and coordinated services providing comprehensive care, including economic empowerment, education on equity and sexual and reproductive health, child care and the prevention and awareness of violence against women. More recently, Ciudad Mujer deployed mobile units to reach women and their children in the most remote and inaccessible areas of our territory.

Paraguay encourages women's access to formal credit through conditioned money-transfer programmes, where the transfers are granted by microcredit committees that are administered by women and prioritize women heads of household, as well as through the Agricultural Credit for Empowerment facility — Crédito Agrícola de Habilitación — the portfolio of which has seen an increase in the proportion of women clients from 10 to 38 per cent since 2013. Through its law on the comprehensive protection of women against all types of violence, Paraguay incorporated the criminalization of femicide into its criminal legislation, and through the law on public policies for rural women and the inter-institutional commission for the implementation of the law, which is composed of 12 institutions, we encourage the participation of rural women in spaces for policymaking and access to the public services offered by the State.

Finally, with regard to the role of the United Nations and the Security Council in the agenda on women and peace and security, the delegation of Paraguay favours, first, the participation of women in decision-making in peace processes and in training for their effective participation in those processes; secondly, the Security Council's clear inclusion of the protection of women in armed conflicts in the mandates of peacekeeping operations; thirdly, advice from gender experts in the planning of political and peacekeeping missions and in sanctions committees; and, fourthly, specialized training for contingents involved in peacekeeping missions, both prior to and after their deployment, on civilian-military coordination, violence and gender inequality.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mr. Duarte Lopes (Portugal): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate.

My statement is fully aligned with the one already delivered by the observer of the European Union.

As we approach the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the gap between commitment and implementation remains particularly significant in matters related to the economic, political and social empowerment of women. Despite the accountability tool created by the resolution, the latest report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security leaves no room for doubt:

> "We continue to witness devastating failures to respect international human rights and humanitarian law across conflicts, particularly with regard to grave violations of women's human rights." (*S/2018/900, para. 1*)

Portugal therefore calls on all Member States to implement resolution 1325 (2000) in a more effective and efficient way. Like many others, we believe that there is a connection between gender equality and the prevention of conflict. Empowering women should be regarded as a fundamental part of any peacebuilding process. Allow me to briefly mention a couple of examples of what we are doing.

We are organizing exchanges and sharing of experiences of officials deployed to peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. We are providing training on gender equality and violence against women and girls to officials in the justice sector, the armed forces and the security forces. A total of 81 Portuguese women are taking part in United Nations and European Union bilateral and regional missions.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — in particular Sustainable Development Goals 4, 5 and 16 — is extremely relevant in the consolidation of the role of women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes. Better articulation between the 2030 Agenda and the resolutions on women and

peace and security would allow for greater investment in education in conflict situations.

Portugal has continuously promoted respect for the right of education, including higher education in humanitarian emergencies. A global and coordinated approach for the promotion of higher education will better equip a new generation of leaders that will be able to rebuild the countries and societies shattered by war and break the cycle of violence. In that context, let me mention the Global Platform for Syrian Students.

Allow me also to call on all Member States to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration. Eighty-one countries, including my own, have joined the Declaration, which was promoted by Norway and Argentina in 2015. The Declaration highlights the importance of protecting access to safe education for women and girls living in conflict.

I conclude with a special reference to Nadia Murad and Denis Mukwege as symbols in the denunciation of sexual violence against women and its use as warfare. The 2018 Nobel Peace Prize acknowledges the unequal consequences that armed conflicts impose upon women, who are particularly vulnerable to sexual crimes, trafficking and other forms of exploitation. Countering such violence is a priority for Portugal in our internal policies and in our external action.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nepal.

Mr. Thapa (Nepal): At the outset, I begin by commending the presidency of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for convening today's annual debate on the women and peace and security agenda. I thank the Secretary-General and the briefers for their updates and insights.

The Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security have aptly underscored the crucial link between gender equality and international peace and security. They have succeeded in ensuring women's engagement as providers of peace and security in conflict-affected societies. Women can be crucial agents of change by offering valuable and innovative perspectives on sustaining peace. Their leadership role in conflict prevention, active engagement in peace negotiations and compassionate protection of civilians as peacekeepers, inter alia, cannot be overemphasized. Moreover, in the absence of the meaningful participation of women, attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will remain a distant dream.

Against that background, I am delighted to share with you, Madam President, Nepal's successful experience of women's engagement in sustaining peace. After signing the comprehensive peace agreement in 2006, the Government of Nepal established the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction with a mandate to play a catalytic role in Nepal's endeavour to achieve sustained peace. The Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction created around 2,800 peace committees at the local level.

In 2011, Nepal adopted its first national action plan, for the period of 2011 to 2016, to implement resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). It was the first country in South Asia and the second in Asia to do so. The Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction coordinated the implementation of the national action plan, while its oversight was ensured by a high-level steering committee co-chaired by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and of Peace and Reconstruction, with members drawn from the relevant ministries and civil society organizations.

Nepal has made explicit efforts to localize its national action plan, with the introduction of localization guidelines in 2013. With the mandatory provision of 33 per cent women's representation in local peace committees, Nepal's national action plan has been an example of a transparent, inclusive and participatory process, with the close involvement of conflict victims and civil society organizations. This paradigm has been extensively shared with countries in the region and beyond. The success of the first national action plan, which, along with the peace agreement, catalysed an enhanced the participation of women in peace negotiations and peacebuilding processes, both at the community and national levels, has led us to the soon-to-be-adopted second national action plan, which focuses on sexual violence, particularly during conflict.

Through its own experiences of its successful home-grown peace process and its partnership with United Nations peacekeeping, Nepal has come to believe that women's increased role in the national context greatly complements the United Nations aspiration of a greater role of women at the global level. In Nepal's case, women's increased representation in legislative and Government bodies and State institutions since 2007 has directly contributed to

fostering good governance and inclusive societies. The man latory level of 33 per cent representation of women, guaranteed under the new Constitution for both federal and provincial legislatures, has qualitatively enhanced the empowerment and ownership of women in all walks of national life. At the same time, Nepal has already seen women assuming the positions of Head of State, Speaker of the Parliament and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The National Women's Commission is now an independent and powerful constitutional body with an comprehensive mandate to monitor and safeguard the rights and interests of women.

Last year's local elections, in which women secured nearly half of the leadership positions — beyond the constitutional guarantee of 40 per cent — are expected to generate further multiplier effects to ensure the maximum inclusion and participation of women in leadership positions, legislation and governance. Moreover, a 33 per cent quota for certain positions in Government services, including in security forces, has been reserved for women. The gender-responsive budget, introduced in 2006, has now reached over 35 per cent of the total budget. We have done all that in earnest and will continue to do so.

Our Constitution requires that the President and Vice-President of the country should represent different genders or communities and that either the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker of the Lower House and the Chair or the Vice-Chair of the Upper House must be women. That provision made it possible for Nepal to have women as President and Speaker of the country for the first time. Women's fair representation in political appointments, as well as in various constitutional bodies, has also been constitutionally guaranteed. All laws of the country are fully aligned with the letter and spirit of the human rights-based Constitution that we adopted in 2015.

In conclusion, I want to state that no peace process will ever succeed without the full, equal and effective participation of women. As a country emerging from a successful endogenous peace process, Nepal stands ready to share its experience and lessons learned through the constructive engagement of women in conflict prevention and resolution and post-conflict restructuring and rebuilding, all geared towards the timely achievement of the SDGs.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Perera (Sri Lanka): I congratulate the Plurinational State of Bolivia on its presidency of the Security Council and thank it for organizing today's open debate. I thank the Secretary-General and other briefers for their remarks and acknowledge the contributions made by the Executive Director of UN-Women and other representatives.

Sri Lanka firmly believes that it is the meaningful participation of women in the international peace and security agenda that will bring about change in the world. It does not suffice that women are present at the peace table merely to satisfy a superficial gender-balance requirement or to check a box on a management-reform achievements sheet. Women must be given the space to truly engage both at the peace table and beyond, and at all levels — as leaders, researchers, workers, penholders and agents of change. Sri Lanka has identified gender equality and women's empowerment as a priority area and is party to numerous relevant international conventions and declarations, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. My Government is currently working to achieve gender equality by enacting gender-sensitive laws and formulating related policies and action plans. Gender equality has been addressed through our Constitution's chapter on fundamental rights and by meeting treaty obligations, as well as by achieving the gender indicators in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sri Lanka was one of the first countries in Asia to grant a universal adult franchise in 1931. Following that, we enacted laws in 1939 and 1945 to ensure free education for all at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Those positive policies, implemented over the years, have resulted in gender parity in education. The right to a free education is enshrined in the Sri Lankan Constitution, which also mandates compulsory schooling between the ages of five and 14. More than 60 per cent of university undergraduates are women. At the primary level, female school attendance is essentially universal, while it stands at 99 per cent for boys. Free health care was introduced very early after Sri Lanka gained its independence in 1948. Sri Lanka adopted a women's charter two years before the Beijing Platform for Action, and we already have in place a national plan of action for women.

For Sri Lanka, sustaining peace through women's political and economic empowerment — a subject that the Bolivian presidency has so carefully chosen for our debate today — is very close to our hearts. Sri

Lanka is now in a post-conflict era, traversing a path of reconciliation and justice. Never has the political and economic empowerment of women been more vital to our peace and prosperity than it is today. The protracted and brutal armed conflict in Sri Lanka left 24 per cent of our female population widowed. Sri Lanka is aware that the protection and economic, social and infrastructural needs of women affected by war continue to require our attention. To that end, we have found it crucial to incorporate gender into our transitional justice process, as stipulated in resolution 1325 (2000). Our Government is focused on three priority areas of women's empowerment — economic enhancement and financial identity, the elimination of violence against women and engagement in public and political life.

The mechanisms and processes for achieving national unity and reconciliation are being conducted under the overall guidance of our office of national unity and reconciliation. Sri Lanka is also in the process of implementing peacebuilding projects, which involve joint programming with the United Nations Development Programme — along with agencies such as UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Health Organization and UN-Women — to implement the joint United Nations programme on preventing and responding to gender-based violence in Sri Lanka, funded by UN-Women. One of the key target groups in our empowerment programmes is female-headed households, including war widows. A national secretariat for widows and households headed by women has been established in former conflict areas in order to serve target groups better.

Sri Lanka has addressed the issue of violence against women using three approaches — prevention, intervention and advocacy for the formulation of policies and laws. A toll-free help line has been established in the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs to receive complaints and provide redress to victims through referral services. Sri Lanka also launched a national action plan for human rights for the period from 2017 to 2021, which reiterates the need to achieve substantive equality, particularly in the economic, political and cultural spheres. In that regard, the Government has allocated a quota of 25 per cent of posts for women in local Government bodies. The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs has also set aside at least 25 per cent of budgetary allocations for projects for rural economic development for women's economic enhancement.

Sri Lanka is also working to reserve a minimum of 25 per cent of the representation in Parliament for women in the near future. In that regard, however, we are ever mindful of the challenges that women face when entering politics and the toxic atmosphere they encounter. Compared to men, they experience disproportionate personal scrutiny, discrimination, character assassination, violence and defamatory statements. Unfortunately, politics has become an inhospitable environment for women, and my Government is committed to fighting the root causes and institutional biases that prevent women from becoming fully empowered in their chosen fields.

Sri Lanka has demonstrated its wholehearted commitment to the elimination of sexual exploitation and abuse. It was one of the first countries to sign the Secretary-General's voluntary compact on eliminating sexual exploitation and abuse. The President of Sri Lanka has joined the Secretary-General's circle of leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations, and we have made contributions to the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

Finally, for more than five decades, Sri Lanka has been making modest contributions to United Nations peacekeeping efforts. We are equally committed to the inclusion of our highly trained and disciplined female forces in peacekeeping efforts. As Sri Lanka proceeds with its reconciliation and peacebuilding process, with the active participation of women at all levels, we will continue to share our experiences and practices, especially in relation to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

Ms. Mudallali (Lebanon): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his statement and his work for gender parity. I also thank the Bolivian presidency for convening today's open debate on an agenda that is ever more relevant since the adoption of landmark resolution 1325 (2000) 18 years ago. I thank the briefers for their statements and their outstanding commitment. I also congratulate Ethiopia for voting its first-ever woman President into office, and I wish her the best of luck.

Throughout my life, I have sadly witnessed many wars in my country, Lebanon, at first hand. That has enabled me to understand what an important factor

women are in achieving peace, maintaining security, rebuilding countries, healing nations' deepest wounds and reinventing hope when it seems impossible ever to dream of it again. It also helped me understand that in situations of conflict and war, women and girls suffer disproportionately and in the ugliest and most abhorrent ways. In war, their gender becomes their misfortune, and when the guns go silent, they are the forgotten ones.

There can be no peace, at least no durable peace, when half of society is excluded from its processes. There can be no security, at least no sustainable security, when it is achieved by discounting women's vital participation and inclusive engagement. There can be no future, in fact no present, when women's voices go unheard or unheeded. Ignoring those voices and overlooking their aspirations impairs the possibility of lasting peace everywhere in the world. Progress has been made, but it has been terribly slow. Nowhere is that more true than in peace negotiations and processes. I am sure that everyone here has heard only too many times today the stunning statistic that only 2 per cent of the mediators in formal peace processes between 1990 and 2017 were women. Even here at the United Nations, it was not until 2013 that the first appointment of a woman as a Special Envoy — Ms. Mary Robinson — was made. Women in conflict-ridden countries consider Security Council resolutions on peace processes to be gender-insensitive. A few resolutions have begun to incorporate a gender perspective and to demand the real participation and inclusion of women at every level of negotiations. We need more of them. We also need to see more women peace envoys in this Chamber and around the world, especially as that is in line with the Secretary-General's vision.

Lebanon remains firmly committed to an inclusive approach to the women and peace and security agenda. During Lebanon's parliamentary elections in May, a record number of women registered as candidates on the ballot. Although the results brought only six hard-won victories, they nonetheless showed that women are as invested as men in political dynamics and the future of the country. The leadership in Lebanon is responsive and is working to empower women. Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri, who was the first to appoint women Ministers in his previous Cabinets, is committed to appointing them for his next Cabinet. He promised that women would play a significant role in the new Government and said that if the country had been handed over to women, we would be in a much better and more pleasant place today.

The National Commission for Lebanese Women was mandated by the Council of Ministers to hold six consultations between April and July 2018, which translated into the country's first national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000) and is expected to be endorsed by the upcoming Cabinet upon its formation. We are also seeing more active participation by women at all levels of governance and in key positions. There has been a qualitative leap in that direction in the security sector, and the Lebanese army is drawing up a strategic plan aimed at ensuring gender parity.

However, in Lebanon as in other parts of the world, implementation gaps continue to hinder the full achievement of the women and peace and security agenda. Gender barriers, the result of social gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes, still exist. We need to address such gaps through a comprehensive legal approach in order to close them. Tangible efforts should be made to prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls from both public and private life. That should and must include peace and security processes at all levels.

Eighteen years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, the time is ripe for the real and irrevocable materialization of its agenda. Women see gender equality as their last battle. That battle requires that we all fight together, shoulder to shoulder, as women try to remake a world where peace is possible and where security is within reach. That battle is inevitable, not only because morally it is the right thing to do, but because factually it is the only way out and because we will not give up. As Secretary-General Guterres said, women will not give up.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus.

Ms. Velichko (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Bolivian presidency for the opportunity to once again address the very relevant issue of women's role and place in resolving the problems of our era. The situation in the world today is characterized by increasingly non-trivial forms of conflict and confrontation and it requires similarly non-trivial approaches to resolving them. Clearly the existing international toolkit is inadequate to an effective response to our emerging challenges. Once again, that forces us to consider the role that women can play in

peacebuilding and sustaining peace. We believe that women, as one of the groups that are most vulnerable to the consequences of armed conflict and confrontations, are uniquely aware of the full force of conflicts and the harm they inflict on future generations and therefore attach particular importance to preserving the values of peace, goodwill and well-being. That is why we should not underestimate initiatives that are aimed at promoting gender equality in issues related to the maintenance of international peace, ensuring the safety and security of women and girls in armed conflict and preventing violence and abuse.

Belarus has always advocated for advancing the role of women in resolving a broad range of issues on the international agenda, and for equality and non-discrimination. We support the ideas outlined in the relevant Council resolutions, including its landmark resolution 1325 (2000). We have traditionally supported the efforts of the Secretary-General, UN-Women, other specialized entities of the United Nations and States themselves in combating violence and protecting women, especially in the context of the role that Belarus plays in international initiatives to combat trafficking in human beings. It is clear that in conflict and post-conflict periods, owing to the collapse of political, economic and social structures, high levels of violence and militarism can worsen the problem of trafficking and enslaving women and children, in regard to which the example of Nadia Murad, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Goodwill Ambassador and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate for 2018, is a shining one. In that regard, Belarus has unprecedented practical experience and a high level of expertise in the field of assisting in global efforts to combat trafficking.

The gender aspect of the work of United Nations peacekeeping missions plays a significant role in the process of improving approaches to current challenges and threats. Belarus is seriously involved in the response to the Secretary-General's call for enhancing the role of women in peacekeeping. Belarusian women are serving successfully as military specialists in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Belarus is also a member of the Circle of Leadership in the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations established on the initiative of the Secretary-General. We believe that the voluntary compact on countering sexual exploitation that was signed by members of the Circle of Leadership will continue to serve as the basis for further efforts to combat the problem. Lastly, we should also note the critical importance of the preventive mediating role that women play in preventing armed conflict. Implementing mediation practices at the early stages of confrontations is an unquestionably effective factor in the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Ms. Krisnamurthi (Indonesia): Let me first thank the Plurinational State of Bolivia for convening this open debate. I also thank the Secretary-General and all the briefers for their remarks.

Indonesia aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the MIKTA countries — Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia.

Women are half of the world and therefore can make up half of every solution. The implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) has put a spotlight on the role of women in peace and security. There are some pertinent points to consider in that regard. First, preventing conflict is far better than settling it. It is the most effective resolution, one that enables everyone — men, women and children — to thrive and coexist in peace. Member States are responsible for preventing conflict and should pursue that goal through various avenues relevant to their national circumstances.

In that context, Indonesia considers women to be drivers of sustaining peace and development through their political and economic empowerment, with the support of their communities. In that connection, the Government has a solid commitment to advancing women's participation in politics and development. In President Jokowi's Administration, women ministers account for one third of the Cabinet and are all tasked with strategic issues. Additionally, 73 women have been elected as regional heads or deputy heads since the last election. Since the last general election, we have formulated a grand design to enhance women's representation in Parliament for the forthcoming election in 2019. Successful women politicians are going into their communities, recruiting other women aspiring to be politicians and giving them first-hand practical experience through mentorship programmes. As a result, in 2018 the number of women running for office has increased. Nearly 10 per cent of the candidates in parliamentary and regional elections were women. We are also empowering women economically, as

women who are economically empowered will become agents of peace, and when they bring prosperity to their communities there will be a stronger inclination to pursue peace.

Secondly, we need to share best practices and optimize what we know about women and peace and security. Research conducted by Indonesia's Wahid Institute found that women possess remarkable potential for promoting peace. Women are more tolerant of differences and less inclined to use violence against disliked groups; 80.7 per cent of women support the right to freedom of religion and belief; and 80.8 per cent of women, as compared to 76.7 per cent of men, do not support radicalism. Women's empowerment therefore becomes a determining factor in efforts to stamp out possible starting points for conflict. Women's empowerment must start at the community level. One example is the Peace Village initiative conducted by the Wahid Foundation in Indonesia in collaboration with UN-Women and Japan. Its main purpose is to empower women at the village level to build resilient communities by combining community empowerment and training in peacebuilding and women's economic empowerment. Respect for religious differences, guarantees of religious freedom and mechanisms for conflict prevention are some of the key indicators that qualify villages for seed capital to develop specific products for their village, with training and financial resources. Indonesia is ready to share the initiative and develop partnerships with other countries as well as the United Nations.

Thirdly, we are aware that women peacekeepers account for only about 3 per cent of the total number of troops on the ground. We need more female peacekeepers on the ground because they have a better capacity for situational awareness; they can provide appropriate protection of civilians against sexual and gender-based violence; they can more easily win the hearts and minds of the local community; and they are prerequisites for sustaining the peace agenda.

Indonesia is committed to continuing to increase the number of female peacekeepers. Indonesian peacekeeping contingents are among the largest, totalling more than 3,500 personnel, of which 72 are female peacekeepers. We are currently training 40 additional female peacekeepers, who will be deployed in the next few months, bringing the total to 112 female peacekeepers.

Indonesia continues to encourage the participation of and to prepare more female peacekeepers, including by integrating the gender perspective into the work of the United Nations peacekeeping operations in which it takes part and as part of the regular curriculum of the Indonesian Peacekeeping Mission Centre in Sentul. Lastly, as a true partner for world peace, we are committed to ensuring strong institutions, linking peace and development and strengthening cooperation, as they are crucial to achieving peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Duque Estrada Meyer (Brazil): Let me begin by thanking the Bolivian presidency for organizing this debate and for producing an excellent concept note (S/2018/904, annex). We also thank the Secretary-General, Under-Secretary-General Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and General Director Randa Siniora Atallah for their presentations.

As neighbours in a region where we have long lived peacefully, Brazil and Bolivia share the urgency in promoting the women and peace and security agenda in South America as a means to empower women and girls, thereby ensuring that our region continues to enjoy lasting peace. Moreover, Brazil joins with Bolivia in commending the inspiring example of the significant and successful inclusion of women in the peace process in Colombia.

In 1919, the Brazilian biologist, lawyer, feminist, politician and one of the four women delegates to the San Francisco Conference Bertha Lutz wrote that the greatest victory of our age would be the emancipation of the woman: she awoke during the period of calm, and when the time for conflict came, she was no longer a pale shadow but had placed herself resolutely beside man in order to fight and to win alongside him.

This year, Brazil celebrates the hundredth anniversary of the admission of the first female diplomat to our Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1918, Maria José de Castro Rebello Mendes was not only the first Brazilian female diplomat but also the first woman to join the civil service in Brazilian history through a public examination process.

Looking back on that century of the presence of Brazilian women in our diplomacy, there is much to celebrate but there are also challenges to overcome. In that context, the women and peace and security agenda

is both a priority in our foreign policy and a means to move forward towards gender equality through domestic policies. Besides being a champion of gender equality since the foundation of the United Nations through Lutz's participation, Brazil has been a long-time sponsor of the women and peace and security agenda in the Security Council. We are particularly proud to have integrated such an agenda into Brazil's South-South cooperation policies by supporting projects aimed at assisting victims of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict-ridden regions in Haiti, Guinea-Bissau and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Last year, Brazil launched its first two-year national action plan on women and peace and security. We are now in the process of reviewing the implementation of the plan. The Brazilian national action plan is based on two main strategic objectives: mainstreaming and empowerment. Those goals are key to the promotion of women as agents of peace and to their protection from gender-based violence. Also, Brazil's national plan follows the four main pillars set out in resolution 1325 (2000): participation, protection, peacebuilding and humanitarian cooperation, and awareness-raising and engagement.

Our national action plan takes into consideration Brazil's reality as a developing country that has been at peace with its neighbours for 150 years and that has demonstrated its willingness and capacity to take on greater responsibilities in international peace and security, whether in multilateral negotiations, in support of peace processes, in peacekeeping operations or in peacebuilding efforts.

So far, one of the main contributions of the national plan has been to increase the visibility of the women and peace and security agenda among multiple actors in the Brazilian Government. Since the adoption of our national action plan, Brazil has achieved other important milestones. In 2017, the first women joined the army's combat roles for the first time. They will now be able to reach the highest posts in the army's hierarchy as they progress in their careers. In addition, the Brazilian Peace Operations Joint Training Centre has incorporated a gender perspective based on the national action plan into the preparation of military and police personnel, as well as civilians, for peacekeeping operations.

The women and peace and security agenda is also about diplomacy. We have sought, and continue to seek, further dialogue and partnerships with countries in order to exchange experiences related to that agenda. Bilateral contacts with many countries on that issue have added depth to the understandings achieved in celebrated multilateral initiatives such as the National Focal Points Network and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, as well as demonstrating that the women and peace and security agenda is a shared priority among many of us.

Besides launching a national plan on women and peace and security, the Brazilian Government has taken other important steps towards a greater presence of women in political life. As of May, political parties must allot at least 30 per cent of radio and television time, as well as of their dedicated campaign financing fund, to female candidates. Following the most recent federal elections, earlier this month, women's participation rose from 10 to 15 per cent of elected representatives in the lower house of Congress, which is still very low. One of the new representatives is Joênia Wapixana, the first indigenous woman elected to the National Congress. Today, she was also announced as one of the three winners of the 2018 United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights.

However, there are challenges ahead. Increasing the number of women in the Brazilian military contingents in peacekeeping operations is a major task. In pursuit of that, we will take into consideration the very concrete goals set last year by the Secretary-General to increase the ratio of women military to 15 per cent and women police officers to 20 per cent of the total personnel in all peacekeeping operations.

As we celebrate 18 years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we must also regret the fact that there is an increasing number of conflicts around the globe. In that regard, Brazil reiterates its unwavering commitment, as noted by Bertha Lutz, to having men and women work side by side in order to achieve lasting peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Namibia.

Mr. Diamonds (Namibia): Namibia welcomes the Security Council's decision to discuss the issue of women and peace and security as a standing agenda item. We are encouraged by the overwhelming support for today's open debate.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security.

We would also like to thank the briefers for their helpful input in our debate.

Progress on the issue of women and peace and security is encouraging, with the Security Council having adopted eight related resolutions. However, the global study carried out in 2015 to mark the fifteenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) revealed that global implementation of the resolution was occurring at a snail's pace.

Reports by the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization have acknowledged the women and peace and security agenda and reported on its implementation. Regional organizations are doing their part, with the African Union having appointed Ms. Bineta Diop as the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security. We commend her work in raising the profile of the issue of women and peace and security globally. By August 2018, 76 countries had adopted and were implementing national action plans on women and peace and security. Those plans provide a valuable tool for States to implement their commitments to the women and peace and security agenda and to detail their actions and obligations under the eight relevant Security Council resolutions.

We recognize that many Member States are implementing resolution 1325 (2000) without national action plans. We encourage them to set up such plans so as to ensure structured implementation, follow-up and evaluation of resolution 1325 (2000), including the recruitment of women into security forces, educating women on how to conduct negotiations and training them to assist women affected by violence in either conflict or non-conflict situations.

Progress can be seen in the general inclusion of the women and peace and security agenda in multilateral forums. As Chair of the Group of Seven (G-7), Canada included a gender-related theme in the proceedings of the G-7 Summit held in June. When Germany recently requested Namibia to partner with it on these issues, it was the first time that Namibia had been approached by a G-7 country to do so within the G-7 framework. We encourage further partnerships of that nature.

Resolution 1325 (2000) sets out to achieve the inclusion of women at the negotiation table. Accordingly, access to quality conflict-sensitive education for women and girls, especially in conflict settings, is essential if women's participation in peacebuilding processes is to be ensured.

Earlier this year, the Security Council unanimously adopted a landmark resolution on protecting children in armed conflict (resolution 2427 (2018)). We call on parties to armed conflicts to immediately cease unlawful attacks and threats of attack against schools, students and teachers and to refrain from actions that impede girls' and women's access to education.

In line with resolution 1325 (2000), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations requested troop-contributing countries to deploy greater numbers of female officers so as to reach the 15 per cent target of women participation in peacekeeping missions by the end of December. As of July, Namibia was at 13.3 per cent in its deployment of female officers, with only two females remaining to be deployed for 2018 to meet the 15 per cent target.

Namibia is a founding member of the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network. The Focal Points Network enables closer coordination among Member States and facilitates annual sharing and exchanges of best practices and lessons learned. The Network welcomes the participation of Member States, UN-Women and civil society organizations. We believe that the Network is critical to the operationalization of the women and peace and security agenda.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to announce that, on 10 and 11 April 2019, Namibia will host, in Windhoek , the third capital-based Focal Points Network Meeting. The theme for the event will be "Women, Peace and Security: Towards Full Participation". All Member States and members of civil society are invited to participate.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the International Organization of la Francophonie.

Ms. Saidane (*spoke in French*): Allow me to thank the Bolivian presidency for organizing today's open debate on the fundamental issue of implementing the women and peace and security agenda and the goal of sustaining peace through the political and economic empowerment of women. I also thank the Ministers of Sweden and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the

Executive Director of UN-Women and Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah for their insightful statements this morning.

This debate gives me an opportunity to present in this forum — which remains the heart of the international peace and security architecture — several aspects relating to the recent steps taken by the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF) with regard to the agenda item under discussion today. The Heads of State and Government of States members of la Francophonie met in Yerevan on 11 and 12 October for their seventeenth summit and adopted a new strategy for the promotion of equality between women and men, and support for the rights and empowerment of women and girls. The seventeenth summit of la Francophonie also made it possible to reinforce the cooperation developed with the United Nations, with the signing of a framework agreement for cooperation between the OIF and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten.

That cooperation will favour political dialogue between parties to conflict for the protection and effective access of victims and survivors to justice, as well as the fight against impunity for perpetrators of violence. Such cooperation will also strengthen national legal frameworks and the adoption of concrete, multisectoral and coordinated measures to prevent such violence by addressing the root causes, in particular discrimination against women and girls.

In operational terms, la Francophonie supports the strengthening of women's participation in peacekeeping operations. In May, the OIF teamed up with the Police Division of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to train female senior officers for the United Nations Police Command. The objective of increasing the still-low number of female uniformed military and police personnel in peacekeeping operations is also on the agenda of the seminar organized today by the OIF in collaboration with the United Nations in a neighbouring room, with the aim of contributing to the effective implementation of the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations to which the OIF has subscribed, as have the African Union, the European Union and NATO, as part of the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

Today we collectively reiterate consensus on two essential points. The first is that the women and peace and security agenda, while based on fundamental rights, remains central to the prevention agenda, as well as to the peacebuilding and sustaining peace agenda. Secondly, we have the satisfaction of already having a range of political, legal and even operational tools at the national, regional and international levels that could enable us to make progress on these issues. And yet it is clear to all of us that despite the progress that has been made, today we still have to say that we are a long way from our goal, considering that in 2017 the number of documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence actually went up by 56 per cent.

The Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie, Ms. Michaëlle Jean, who spoke here in October 2017, during the last debate on this topic (see S/PV.8234), asked a question that I would like to reiterate. "What are we afraid of?" Because what is actually at stake here is our ability to make profound changes to the foundations of our political and economic systems and to deconstruct the stereotypes that underlie the question that brings us together today. As we know, on the ground women show unparalleled resilience, strength and creativity in overcoming the physical, socioeconomic and political constraints that limit their lives. They are empowered and have proven their intrinsic ability to use their power for the common good every day. They undoubtedly contribute smiles and gentleness, as some speakers have already said this morning. As a woman, I take this reference to the feminine nature, while perhaps somewhat stereotypical, as a compliment. But if we are to make serious progress today or, as some have said, if we want to finally hasten the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, we must move resolutely beyond the perception that women still have to be trained and empowered to play a role. It is interesting, by the way, that no one, in the Council or elsewhere, ever wonders whether the men who participate in these peace processes have been adequately trained, which, given the state of the world and with all due respect to men, would seem not always to be the case.

Some speakers have mentioned the inherent biases in the economic and social system that still determine women's ability not to be vulnerable but rather to be in a position when they no longer fear attacks and can control their own lives, like their male counterparts. Initiating the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda must therefore be part of all sectoral policies as a whole and at the heart of the decisions that

determine them. It is only by dismantling the social norms that are the foundation of the devaluation of the role of women — the devaluation that enables men to legitimize the worst kinds of violence committed against women and girls during conflicts — that we can hasten the implementation of this agenda on every front: protection, education, economic participation and political power. That is also where we will make progress in striking a better balance so that we can perhaps begin to address the overrepresentation of men rather than the underrepresentation of women in some of these processes. There has been too little funding until now to enable that change to happen and it is time to speed that up both in terms of financing and partnerships.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Saidane for her statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Gad (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN-Women, for her valuable briefing, along with the other briefers and all my colleagues on the Security Council and other relevant bodies. Over the past two decades, the experience of the Security Council has demonstrated that women's participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding produces better results in achieving and sustaining peace while avoiding conflict. Women can participate actively in such efforts only if they are economically and politically empowered. In the context of following up on implementing the recommendations in the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), we would like to stress the following points.

First, Egypt supports resolution 1325 (2000), on the importance of creating institutional frameworks for women's participation in peacemaking, and in that context, we welcome the creation of women's mediation networks, which we believe should be based on diverse models, since there is no single model that is implementable in every conflict, and which should therefore be created based on the requirements and specifics of each conflict. We should not interfere in the establishment of such networks or impose particular forms on them. They should evolve spontaneously from each individual conflict, starting locally and going up to the national level. The international community should limit its role to capacity-building. Given the fact that there are so many of these networks all over the world, we believe that it is important to link them under one coordinating mechanism that can enable them to exchange their experiences and lessons learned. The day before yesterday, in collaboration with UN-Women and the African Union, Egypt organized a meeting on this topic attended by women mediation networks from Africa, the Mediterranean, the Nordic countries and the Commonwealth States, focusing on ways to coordinate their networks and provide them with support while ensuring their sustainability and creating a coordination mechanism for all of them.

Secondly, we appreciate and support the United Nations strategy for gender parity, which we consider an integral part of the reform of the United Nations system.

Thirdly, we reiterate our concern about the increasing suffering of women and girls as a result of terrorism in areas of armed conflict, as well as the fact that the suffering of Palestinian women under occupation has been persistently ignored in the women and peace and security agenda.

Fourthly, women's economic empowerment is a high priority for Egypt in the context of our chairship of the Group of 77 and China this year, and is something that must continue to happen in times of peace, conflict or post-conflict, as it too enables women to play a greater part in decision-making, peacebuilding and lasting peace.

Egypt is making every effort to implement the women and peace and security agenda. With regard to combating sexual exploitation and aggression, we have worked to raise awareness among our forces participating in peacekeeping missions by introducing a full, thorough model into their predeployment training programme as a response to the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. Egypt also organizes advanced training sessions for military commanders in that regard. The Cairo International Centre for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding, which is responsible for training peacekeeping troops, has published a guidance manual on preventing sexual exploitation and aggression in peacekeeping operations that is distributed to Egyptian peacekeeping troops. It is available to all other troop-contributing countries and has been translated into English and French.

At the regional level, the Cairo Centre organizes training sessions for African and Arab military

personnel and police officers participating in peacekeeping operations.

Egypt also joined the African Women Leaders Network because we believe in the importance of such networks and in strengthening them. We call upon the international community to make greater efforts to provide financial support for the sustainability of such forums.

At the international level, Egypt was among the first States to join the Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network. We have undertaken this year a voluntary commitment to prevent sexual exploitation and aggression.

In conclusion, we call for a renewed political and ethical commitment to empowering women economically and politically in regions and States that have recently emerged from conflict. Women are the primary drivers of transformation from conflict to development and from societies shattered by armed conflict to healthy societies that are capable of moving forward towards achieving sustainable peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya.

Mr. Amayo (Kenya): At the outset, my delegation welcomes the briefings by the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres; Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; and the representative of civil society.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security and by the representative of Ghana on behalf of the Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network to the United Nations.

Let me also at this stage take this opportunity to join colleagues in congratulating our neighbour to the north, Ethiopia, on having elected Her Excellency Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde as the first female President of the Federal Republic.

Kenya also wishes to join other speakers in extending its compliments to the Plurinational State of Bolivia for convening this important meeting today, focusing on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in the area of women's political and economic empowerment. We would also like to welcome the efforts made by the Secretary-General to enhance women's participation and gender parity in the United Nations system. We recognize that addressing the groundbreaking resolution 1325 (2000) is a prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable peace.

This open debate has come at an opportune time for us. In marking the eighteenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), we in Kenya have just concluded a high-level peer review meeting on women and peace and security, where experiences were shared on accountability in the implementation of resolutions focused on women and peace and security.

Although at the global level some progress has been made towards the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), we note that such implementation still faces challenges in terms of bringing about the meaningful integration of women into the peace-conflict continuum as agents of change in political and development forums, including as active players in the fight against radicalization and the international threat of terror. We therefore believe that it is critical — despite our diverse cultural and social norms — to take a whole-of-society approach where young boys and men can also see their role in championing and implementing the women and peace and security agenda.

At the regional level, our dedication to the women and peace and security agenda is underlined by our full support for the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the Continental Results Framework for Monitoring and Reporting on the Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa. We are pleased to be among the member States that validated the Continental Results Framework earlier this year, in March. Since then, recent efforts have been focused on ensuring that Kenya's national action plan, entitled "To involve women is to sustain peace", aligns its monitoring and evaluation tools with the Continental Results Framework.

Beyond regional efforts, the Government has made significant strides towards strengthening women's equal and full participation in peace and security processes. Kenya's national action plan has served as a key policy framework for both State and non-State actors in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Within this framework, we have increased efforts to integrate gender into the national peace architecture, as well as gender-mainstreaming

peace and security issues. Key examples of this include the appointment of women in key decision-making dockets such as the Ministry of Defence, which is central to the management of armed conflict, and the establishment of a task force on women and peace and security within the gender sector working group, a platform that brings together State and non-State actors to advance national priorities on gender. Equally important is the appointment of focal officers in all Government ministries to champion and to monitor and report on the implementation of the national action plan within their sectors. Last but not least, I would note the deployment of Kenyan women in peace-support operations, which, as of 2017, stood at 19 per cent. This surpasses the United Nations-recommended percentage of 15 per cent.

Finally, we wish to reiterate Kenya's continued engagement in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We believe that much more needs to be done at the national and global levels to educate all segments of society on the centrality of the empowerment of women and girls in sustaining peace. Therefore, as we approach the twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), in 2020, we urge Member States to move beyond rhetoric and create an enabling environment for women to actively engage in peace and security processes at all levels.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Luxembourg.

Mr. Braun (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General and the briefers, who have enriched this debate. Our thanks also go to Bolivia for organizing this debate under its presidency of the Security Council.

The upcoming twentieth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) offers an opportunity to highlight and assess the progress made since its adoption in 2000. However, we deem regrettable the delays in its implementation as well as the continued existence of a wide range of structural and systemic barriers to the full realization of women's rights and their political, economic and social empowerment.

This year, the Security Council's Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security highlighted a series of obstacles to women's effective participation in peace and security processes. These include the fact that women's economic, social and cultural rights are not sufficiently guaranteed and that they have a low rate of participation in politics and continue to suffer from poverty and, in many cases, sexual and gender-based violence. Misogynistic prejudices and institutionalized discrimination continue to hinder sustainable peace. It is incumbent upon us all to support the rights of women and girls and promote gender equality as a matter of priority in order to enable the effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. In that respect, my country fully endorses the statement made by the observer of the European Union and will contribute to the implementation of the commitments that it laid out.

This year, my Government adopted its first women and peace and security action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). It is a five-year plan that sets national and international objectives in four areas — the equal participation of women and men at all levels of peace and security processes, prevention, protection against sexual and gender-based violence along with relief and recovery, and the promotion of the women and peace and security agenda at the international level.

The national plan concerns all areas of Government action relating to our foreign policy, in particular diplomacy, defence and development, justice, refugee reception and health, as well as internal security. My country will support the participation of women in decision-making on peace and security issues, including in international organizations, and the increased participation of women in peacekeeping operations and electoral observation missions. The Government also aims to strengthen predeployment training for military and civilian personnel, including the training of gender advisers and experts.

The women and peace and security action plan complements our national gender-equality plan, which promotes gender parity in decision-making and employment and advocates the systematic integration of the gender dimension into the strategies we pursue, particularly with regard to our official development assistance, which, as representatives perhaps know, amounts to 1 per cent of our gross national income.

My country of course supports United Nations action to implement resolution 1325 (2000). I would like to recall our support for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and our partnership with Justice Rapid Response, UN-Women and the Institute for International Criminal Investigations. We are also

one of the top 20 contributors, in absolute terms, to UN-Women. I would also like to highlight our support for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Patten, and our contributions to the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

Finally, I would like to note that, at the end of March 2019, Her Royal Highness the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg will organize an international conference in Luxembourg to strengthen support for survivors of sexual violence, which will, we hope, contribute to the objective of ending sexual violence in high-risk areas.

We know that gender equality is a prerequisite for peace and sustainable development. Each State and each regional and international organization has a role to play in advancing the role of women in the interest of peace and security. Only by redoubling our efforts to end discrimination against women in times of war and peace will we succeed in advancing the peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Maldives.

Mr. Mohamed (Maldives): I wish to thank the Government of Bolivia for convening this important debate on the women and peace and security agenda.

No society can sustain peace or realize peace dividends unless women are involved in the making of decisions on peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. There is sufficient empirical evidence, including the examples cited in the concept note for this debate (S/2018/904, annex), that confirms that, when we invest in cultivating the values of respect for the rights of women and gender equality and the rejection of discrimination against women, the chances are always higher that we will be able to sustain peace and achieve social and economic progress.

The Security Council has adopted eight resolutions over the past 16 years on the women and peace and security agenda. We are pleased to note that significant progress has been achieved in a number of countries, as highlighted in the concept note. Furthermore, we would like to acknowledge that resolution 1325 (2000) places strong emphasis on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women.

It is therefore time that the Council prioritize a gender perspective in diagnosing security-risk situations and in formulating solutions for reducing such risks. The Council must consider the meaningful participation and empowerment of women across all agenda items, including in all mandate renewals. It must provide the necessary leadership and follow-up to the implementation of its resolutions on the topic, and it must produce analytical evidence-based progress reports. Most important, the women and peace and security agenda must become part of the Council's regular toolbox, in addition to debates such as the one we are holding today.

Maldives is fortunate to have a tradition where household decisions are taken jointly by women and men in most situations. Maldives has always had universal adult suffrage, and we have always had maternal and paternal leave, which are now guaranteed by law. There has never been discrimination in school enrolment or employment, and now girls outperform boys in secondary school graduation rates.

Beyond those achievements, Maldives is continuing its efforts to overcome existing challenges to ensuring respect for the rights of women. It is taking steps to increase the number of women in executive positions and decision-making roles in both the Government and the private sectors, while continuously challenging the traditional paradigm that women occupying senior positions in companies or the Government have to make a binary choice between career and family.

Through our employment act, Maldives has already taken steps to ensure that women are ensured equal access to employment and equal pay for equal work. The act also makes it illegal to use gender or marital status as a basis for terminating employment. In 2016, Maldives enacted a gender equality act, which outlines the steps that the Government, business entities, non-governmental organizations and other employers should take to ensure equality and non-discrimination with regard to women and girls. It also requires the Government and political parties to ensure that equal opportunities exist for women and girls to participate at all levels of political life.

Women are the custodians of the cultural and spiritual values of a community. We must accept that the role of women has changed at a rapid pace and that women now profoundly affect all aspects of society. We must ensure that women's progress is sustained and accelerated, if we are to realize the promises set forth in the Council's resolutions.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): Let me join my colleagues in expressing our appreciation to the Bolivian presidency for convening today's meeting. I also want to acknowledge all of the briefers.

Georgia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union. In my national capacity, I would like to add the following comments.

Women are indeed at the centre of the conflict-prevention platform of the United Nations. While gender parity in the Organization's peace and security sector has yet to be achieved, we welcome the significant and continuous efforts by the Secretary-General and the Security Council to increase women's participation in areas pertaining to international peace and security.

Based on key findings, recommendations and consultations with civil society, the Government of Georgia has already adopted its third national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), covering the period of 2018-2020. Its first plan was adopted in 2011. Apart from delivering on the global women and peace and security agenda, the plan is also aimed at protecting the rights of conflict-affected women by ensuring their physical, social, economic and political security, as well as eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and supporting their participation in decision-making.

Particular emphasis is given to ensuring a gender perspective in peace negotiations and to the promotion of the meaningful participation of women and girls in conflict prevention. The 2018-2020 national action plan has been harmonized with the Government's action plan on the protection of human rights and aligned with the relevant objectives, targets and indicators set for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national level. The plan has also been incorporated into the agency-specific internal action plans of lead Government agencies and local municipalities, with civil society and development partners playing an important support role.

Within the framework of our commitments under resolution 1325 (2000), we continue to promote conflict-affected women in Georgia as a driving force of public diplomacy. As a result, today more than 65 per cent of those involved in peace processes in Georgia are women. Furthermore, the Government of Georgia facilitates an increased role for women in reconciliation and confidence-building projects, carried out with the support of local and international organizations.

Yet despite those efforts to empower conflict-affected women, the Russian Federation's ongoing occupation of Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali hinders the peace process and imposes severe conditions on one of the most vulnerable parts of our society. Women living in Georgia's occupied regions, as well as in areas adjacent to the occupation line, are systematically subjected to human rights violations, including the denial of the right to the freedom of movement, illegal detentions by the occupying forces and threats to physical security for so-called illegal border crossings.

In the light of that, let me brief the Council about a Georgian woman, Maia Otinashvili, who is the most recent victim of the occupation. While harvesting a plot of agricultural land in her own orchard, Maia Otinashvili was seized and kidnapped from the village of Khurvaleti by the occupation forces. Ms. Otinashvili, who is a mother to three minors, was physically abused, blindfolded and rushed to Russia's illegal military base, where she was accused of the so-called facilitation of illegal border crossing. It took 10 days of persistent efforts by the Georgian Government and international organizations to have Maia Otinashvili released and returned to her family, who is suffering from severe emotional and psychological trauma.

Sadly, Ms. Otinashvili's story is not an unusual case, but an everyday part of life for those living in the vicinity of the occupation line. Overall, from 2015 to 2018, 160 women have been illegally detained by Russian occupation forces and the authorities in control. Despite numerous Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 876 (1993), 993 (1995) and 1187 (1998), as well as numerous General Assembly resolutions stressing the necessity to address the need for the dignified return of all internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, hundreds of thousands of IDPs and refugees — including women, children and other vulnerable strata of society — remain prevented from the right to return to their places of origin in safety and with dignity.

Against that background, my country's commitment to the peaceful resolution of the conflict remains unwavering. We will continue to spare no effort to facilitate the reconciliation process among the war-

torn population by integrating gender perspectives in decision-making, protecting the rights of women and promoting their meaningful participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

In conclusion, while we reaffirm Georgia's commitment to advancing the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, both nationally and globally, we call for increased attention from the members of the Security Council to the protection of women's rights in the occupied regions of Georgia and other conflict-affected areas around the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Montenegro.

Mrs. Pejanović Đurišić (Montenegro): As we are approaching the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), I would like to thank the Bolivian presidency for organizing today's open debate on promoting the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda through women's political and economic empowerment and for preparing an informative concept note (S/2018/904, annex).

My country fully associates itself with the statement made by observer of the European Union, as well as the statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security. I would, however, like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

Women around the world are systematically underrepresented in decision-making, not only in the political arena but also in economic and wider social spheres. In many places they have fewer resources and are even deprived of fundamental rights in a number of sectors, such as education, health, the economy and the media. Women are often marginalized, made to feel vulnerable and victims of violence and exploitation in different contexts and environments. That is a fact, in spite of the common knowledge and available data showing that societies are stronger when the rights of women and girls are respected, when women are valued and empowered and when they have leading roles in ensuring security and peace, as well as in political and economic activities.

The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/900) shows that the current level of implementation of the women and peace and security agenda still falls short of the mark. Today's debate is an opportunity to learn more about the successful cases of the inclusion of women and the various positive and negative experiences related thereto. In that manner, we will be able to consider which practical measures should be taken to further promote gender equality, the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and the construction of stable, more economically developed and fairer societies, and, on that basis, to commit ourselves to do more.

Women's voices are not heard on a number of issues that concern their lives and the lives of their families and communities. We must support their ability to influence policies that promote the peacebuilding and development agenda and reduce inequality. Montenegro has a comprehensive approach to gender equality at the national level, with a focus on three priorities: first, increasing the political participation of women; secondly, combating violence against women; and, thirdly, supporting the economic empowerment of women. We are striving to create an efficient framework for the systematic improvement of the position of women and girls in Montenegro. However, work in individual countries is not enough to address and overcome these shared challenges. That is why we are trying to contribute to efforts at the international level aimed at delivering on this important agenda.

Montenegro supports international efforts to implement resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security. In cooperation with UN-Women and other international stakeholders, we have implemented mechanisms for following-up and monitoring the implementation of the resolution. At the moment, we are preparing the next national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), for the period 2019-2023, building on the progress made and lessons learned. We actively participate in the work of the agenda of the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network, as well as that of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network.

In line with our NATO commitments, we have contributed to the NATO Trust Fund for Jordan, which aims at increasing female representation and supporting the recruitment of female officers and gender training. We have also sent an experienced gender adviser, responsible for advice and operational support on the implementation of the resolution 1325 (2000), to NATO headquarters. A number of female officers in our armed forces were trained and certified as regional instructors for the implementation of the gender agenda in international peacekeeping missions and operations. We support the United Nations actions

against conflict-related sexual violence, and we highly value the importance of training peacekeeping personnel on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse. We also joined the European Union's Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women and girls, which is to be implemented worldwide together with the United Nations.

The women and peace and security agenda is having an effect on global policymaking. We should spare no effort to open up real opportunities for women and girls in schools, businesses, military ranks and peace processes. Montenegro is fully committed to this agenda. Increasing the participation of women in politics and the security sector is a process that is showing certain positive results, but we should be more committed to women's empowerment in economic spheres. Enabling half of the world's population to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by serving their communities is the way to make real achievements when it comes to sustainable development and peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Ms. Al Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Security Council under the presidency of Bolivia for convening today's open debate on women and peace and security. I also thank the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for their briefings, leadership and efforts aimed at enhancing the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. I also welcome the participation of Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah, General Director of the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling. I would like to touch on four main points in my statement.

First, with regard to the enhancement of transitional justice for women, there is increasing evidence that, since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), impunity for sexual and gender-based violence in conflicts is considered a prerequisite to sustainable peace. The State of Qatar has therefore supported efforts to facilitate the establishment of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. The State of Qatar has been committed to providing it with financial support. Given the obstacles to finding alternative ways to establish accountability for crimes, the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism plays an important role in supporting investigations on sexual and gender-based violence impartially and independently. It supports the prosecution of perpetrators by taking into consideration the importance of this step towards achieving transitional justice for women in Syria. The State of Qatar is helping in every possible way to ensure its success.

Secondly, I would like to express how pleased we are that the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Dr. Denis Mukwege and Ms. Nadia Murad, the United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking, in acknowledgement of their efforts to put an end to the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war in armed conflicts. That recognition stresses the importance of continuing to condemn impunity for sexual crimes committed in conflict. It is an appeal to States and the international community to redouble their efforts to end the use of sexual violence against women as a strategy and weapon of war, as well as to achieve justice.

The State of Qatar, as one of the main donors to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, takes pride in supporting the work and programmes that ensure the provision of support for women who have been subjected to trafficking, as well as the necessary assistance and protection to ensure their physical, psychological, social and economic recovery and their reintegration.

Thirdly, with regard to young women's participation in peace processes, we are all aware of the vital role of young people in efforts leading to peacebuilding and sustainable peace. However, young women frequently continue to be excluded from peacebuilding efforts. In that respect, we would like to highlight the timely initiative taken by the State of Qatar, Finland and Colombia, in collaboration with the United Nations Special Envoy on Youth and a number of United Nations relevant agencies, which will include the holding in Helsinki, from 5 to 7 March 2019, of the first international conference on youth participation in peace, in which some 80 key stakeholders in the area of youth engagement in peace will take part. It will be an opportunity to engage in an open discussion on youth participation in peace, bridge gaps for women activists

in peacebuilding and enhance our tools for sharing best practices in that area.

Fourthly, while in recent years women have taken on many different roles — as negotiators, mediators, soldiers and police officers — their stories, accomplishments and lessons learned have not been shared or documented. The State of Qatar, together with Colombia, has therefore recently published a book entitled *HERstory: Celebrating Women Leaders in the United Nations*, which highlights the accomplishments of women leaders in the area of peace and security throughout the history of the United Nations. In his foreword to the book, the Secretary-General writes, "Their accomplishments remind us of what we miss when the role of women is absent". We must emphasize that many of those women are still here with us today. However, what we need to do is not just celebrate them but make them part of our daily life. As the book says, women come with a perspective, an approach and a collection of essential skills and expertise for enhancing international peace and security and the women and peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

Mr. Hawke (New Zealand): New Zealand thanks Bolivia for convening this important open debate, and the Secretary-General for his report (S/2018/900). We would like to highlight two themes from the report. The first is women's participation in peacekeeping and the second is the barriers to women's access to essential services in conflict and humanitarian situations.

Earlier this month, New Zealand hosted the annual conference of the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres (IAPTC), which included workshops on the women and peace and security agenda. We were gratified to see a continued commitment to the greater participation of women in peacekeeping operations and to see ideas shared openly and constructively. New Zealand, which currently holds the presidency of the IAPTC, is pleased to share that New Zealand's Colonel Helen Cooper is its first female President in its 24-year history. Over the coming year, we will be working with some of the peacekeeping training centres on initiatives to further commitments on women and peace and security commitments.

Besides participation in peacekeeping, the Secretary-General's report highlights the discriminatory barriers that women and girls face in conflict and humanitarian situations. We know that women and girls are disproportionately exposed to a high risk of violations of their human rights in such situations. Empirical evidence shows that reduced access to sexual and reproductive health services results in the needless loss of lives, owing to increased rates of unsafe abortions and preventable maternal mortality and morbidity. Removing discriminatory barriers to access is critical to ensuring the health and safety of women and girls. Women and girls must have power over their own lives, including the right to fully control and freely decide matters relating to their sexual and reproductive health and rights. We welcome the adoption of Human Rights Council resolution 39/10, on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights in humanitarian settings.

We all benefit when the women and peace and security agenda is fully realized. We build safer and more prosperous societies, our peacekeeping efforts are more likely to take hold and we improve the chances of achieving sustainable peace. I want to affirm that New Zealand, as the first country to recognize women's suffrage, remains committed to realizing that agenda. As we near the end of the time frame for our first national action plan, we look forward to working with civil society to identify ambitious targets and actions for our second.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mrs. Sudmalis (Australia): There is no one-size-fits-all solution to ensuring women's meaningful participation in peace processes. We need research and to share knowledge to translate the theoretical concepts of the women and peace and security agenda into action and good practice. We need to identify solutions and approaches that are context-specific, inclusive and informed by experience, especially that of local actors.

Australia welcomes the report of the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security and its recommendations, and commends the work of the experts who contributed to it. *Towards an Inclusive Peace*, an Australian-funded research project in partnership with Australia's universities, focuses on women and peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region. That research, which also informed the Expert Group's report, shows that one of the most crucial factors in securing lasting peace agreements is the active presence of women's civil-society organizations. Women's organizations

are on the ground before, during and after conflicts. They help mediate and resolve conflicts and rebuild community relations and trust in institutions. Yet women's organizations in our region tell us that it is only when women enter the post-conflict security sector or Government that their governance skills, capacities and qualities are fully appreciated.

Australia is proud to be the founding and largest donor to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund in support of women's grass-roots organizations. We are also proud to support UN-Women's Global Acceleration Instrument for Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action. The research also shows that women's meaningful participation is rarely adequately supported or funded. Too often institutional arrangements exclude women from key processes, and stand-alone measures such as quotas are not enough in isolation. Women from our region are seeking practical responses. Access to childcare, safe transport and toilets, consulting with women on the timing of meetings and funding travel for companions or carers are among their suggestions. They also seek protection from and an end to the violence that they face from those who oppose their activism and leadership.

Australia is also researching the gendered dimensions of violent extremism in the region and the various roles that women play and could play in countering extremism and promoting stability and inclusion. All of those research findings will inform Australia's second national action plan, expected in mid-2019.

Australia has greatly progressed its military gender adviser capability. We have trained 101 Australian military gender advisers to deploy on operations and exercises. We have established 10 full-time gender-adviser positions dedicated to mainstreaming and integrating a military gender perspective in Australia. We have also established four permanent deployed gender-adviser positions, including the first Gender Adviser to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan.

A commitment to peace demands a commitment to women's meaningful participation in peace efforts. We stand ready to learn more and to share our knowledge of the meaningful actions that we can take to secure and ensure genuinely inclusive peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Ms. García Gutiérrez (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica thanks the presidency of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for having convened this open debate and the Secretary-General for his report (S/2018/900). We also express our thanks for the briefings provided earlier.

We are pleased that today we are focusing our discussions on the importance of women's economic and political empowerment. We have seen that, when women occupy decision-making positions and are significantly involved in conflict-resolution and peacebuilding processes, results are more positive, as this creates increased trust and social cohesion. We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General to reform the Organization, in particular the reform of the peace and security architecture, which is a reflection of his work to rectify factors that have prevented gender parity from being achieved in peacekeeping operations' missions. In order to help meet the goal of increasing women's representation, 80 per cent of my country's personnel contribution are women. We believe that the presence of gender and human rights perspectives in the various areas of work involving peace and security processes, for example, in commissions of inquiry and mediation processes, as well as transitional justice mechanisms, is key.

In that regard, it is important that peace agreements include gender-related provisions and that women's meaningful participation in negotiating, drawing up, following up and implementing them be ensured. Another key dimension of that work involves addressing the effects of armed violence on women and the important role that they can play in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control so as to curtail the cycle of violence created in such situations. In his report, the Secretary-General highlights the underrepresentation of women in disarmament efforts, which must be rectified. In that regard, we welcome his agenda for disarmament, outlined in the document *Securing our Common Future: an Agenda for Disarmament*, and his focus on the participation of women in that area in line with the purposes of the women and peace and security agenda.

Peace and stability cannot be achieved without concrete policies that ensure inclusivity and respond to gender concerns. Women's meaningful participation in the political life of their communities and in conflict resolution and peacekeeping processes will be achieved only if institutionalized discrimination, gender-based prejudices, unequal power dynamics and the failure to

fully recognize women's human rights are challenged and eradicated. Costa Rica recognizes the importance of institutionalizing those efforts. Consequently, we have established the 2018-2030 policy for effective equality between women and men — a multidimensional and comprehensive instrument whose main goal is to overcome the structural obstacles that lead to, recreate and reinforce inequalities between women and men and impede meaningful progress towards achieving equality. Similarly, we are implementing legislation and regulatory changes and making the relevant budget allocations to strengthen women's political participation and achieve gender parity in State institutions at the national and local levels, as well as in social organizations and political parties. We have translated those efforts into reality by forming the current Cabinet, which enjoys gender parity. We are working consistently in the areas of job training, gender education and training, leadership development, political participation and empowerment to increase women's potential influence in decision-making, thereby enabling them to actively exercise their rights as citizens.

Abuse and violence are silent obstacles preventing women's advancement and their development in all areas of their lives. In order to combat that serious and widespread problem, my country has established a national policy to focus on, prevent and protect women from violence. In August, our Executive Power declared that addressing and preventing violence against women was in the national interest. Accordingly, we reiterate that the widespread use of sexual violence as a tactic of terror and a weapon of war is heartrending and unacceptable, as it is also responsible for the political and economic marginalization of women and girls. We welcome the recognition of the importance of that subject as reflected in the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad.

Women's economic empowerment has a positive effect on post-conflict recovery and on communities' economic growth in general. Discriminatory practices must be eliminated; women's access to economic and financial resources and health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, must be ensured; and legal frameworks that include discriminatory provisions perpetuating gender inequality and an imbalance in the enjoyment of rights must be rectified. Our priority must be to involve women in leadership positions, enabling them to play a role in decision-making and provide a gender perspective at all levels of participation, as well as in all activities involving the peace and security agenda. Such work must share a common denominator with all efforts aimed at the safeguarding of human rights. We call for the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda to be prioritized in drawing up our countries' public policies so as to move forward decisively in conflict prevention, thereby achieving sustained peace and sustainable development for every man and woman.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Liberia.

Mr. Kemayah (Liberia):I thank the Security Council for convening this open debate on women and peace and security, with a keen focus on the sustenance of peace through women's political and economic empowerment. We consider this to be a matter of great importance. Accordingly, I am greatly honoured to deliver a statement on that premise and, in the same vein, express our appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, for her insightful briefing and to Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah for speaking on behalf of civil society.

Studies have shown that including women in conflict prevention and resolution generally leads to a more secure peace, and it has become increasingly evident that no society has successfully transitioned out of conflict except when women were a part of the mainstream of that society. Furthermore, it has been eight years since we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the landmark resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, with many activities, including a similar open debate in this very Chamber (see S/PV.6453), and other open debates in subsequent years. Yet women's participation in peace and security processes remains beset by obstacles, including, but not limited to, commitments that lack sufficient financial and political support. Despite the gains made in gender equality in the women's empowerment agenda, challenges involving inequities still abound.

To that end, it is the resolve of His Excellency Mr. George Manneh Weah, President of the Republic of Liberia, its Government and its people that we must collectively endeavour to invest in the meaningful contributions that women make in the prevention and resolution of conflict in order to realize a more peaceful and secure environment around the world. Let us all pay

heed to the call of the Secretary-General for Member States to initiate national and regional review processes in the lead-up to the twentieth anniversary, in 2020, of resolution 1325 (2000). Before Liberia adopted its national action plan on that resolution in 2009, Liberian women had already been involved in peacebuilding. Therefore, the resolution gave only added impetus to the efforts that were already being exerted by the women of Liberia. Liberia remains unwavering in its unflinching practical commitment to achieving gender parity and upholding women's rights. What is even more captivating is that the commitments to implementing resolution 1325 (2000) have received a renewed boost from the dynamic leadership of President Weah. Those commitments are given priority in their respective institutional frameworks, including, but not limited to, the Government of Liberia's pro-poor agenda for prosperity and development, which will be launched on Saturday, 27 October in Ganta, Nimba county, Liberia by President Weah, including its revised national agenda policy and its peacebuilding plan.

The pro-poor agenda sets ambitious targets to enhance the inclusion of women and girls to reduce political, social and economic inequalities. President Weah is Liberia's feminist-in-chief, a HeForShe champion who has emphasized his advocacy for advancing women in political leadership through his appointment and support of women to occupy political positions. President Weah selected the honorable Vice-President of Liberia, Jewel Howard Taylor, as his running mate on the ticket of the Coalition for Democratic Change. He appointed the first woman in our history to occupy the position of Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Liberia, Colonel Geraldine Janet George. And he appointed a woman as Deputy Inspector General of the Liberian National Police, Colonel Sadatu Teage Reeves, just to mention a few. While we endeavor as a country to address the challenges besetting women's participation in peace and security processes, we want to commend nations that are leading by example, including those that have formulated strategies to increase women's participation in peace and security processes and improve their protection from violence.

In conclusion, on behalf President Weah, the Government and the people of Liberia, we commend the United Nations country team, in particular UN-Women in its leadership role, the Peacebuilding Fund, our international partners and all other stakeholders for their consistent support to the efforts of the Government and the people of Liberia to lift and empower women in all sectors of society. As a country, Liberia looks forward to strengthening support and encouragement through its alignment as a member of the Group of Friends of the African Women Leaders Network, the Women, Peace and Security Focal Point Network and the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security here at the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Kadiri (Morocco) (*Spoke in French*): First of all, my delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on an issue of the utmost importance, that of women and peace and security. I would also like to thank all the briefers for their statements.

Conflicts have devastating consequences for all societies. They have a particular impact on women and girls, who are most often the target of gender-based violence and the most excluded from political processes related to peacebuilding and strengthening security. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has placed strong emphasis on peace, including conflict prevention and the elimination of root causes through Sustainable Development Goal 16, which is to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development for all, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels for everyone. That universal Agenda enshrines another goal — Sustainable Development Goal 5 — that is dedicated to gender equality through the empowerment of women and girls and which promotes the mainstreaming of gender in all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In that sense, the SDGs demonstrate that gender, peace, security and development are linked, interconnected and inseparable.

In addition, we are pleased that Secretary-General António Guterres has made the issues of women's empowerment and gender equality a priority for his mandate. Similarly, the Security Council is ensuring that it incorporates the dimension of women and peace and security in all international peace issues. The historic adoption, 18 years ago, of resolution 1325 (2000) represented an acknowledgement of the role of women in peace and security, not just as victims but also as agents of change and key players

in the restoration and maintenance of peace, as well as peacebuilding. The adoption of tat resolution, as well as those that followed it, sends a strong message of the international community's firm and ongoing commitment to help empower women and protect their rights. Conflict prevention is a central pillar of the women and peace and security agenda. Resolution 2122 (2013) reaffirmed the role of women at all stages of conflict, including conflict prevention and resolution and post-conflict recovery. The resolution filled a gap in the interpretation of previous relevant resolutions that addressed only the prevention of gender-based violence during conflict, rather than the role of women themselves in the prevention of conflict.

There is therefore a need to take a more comprehensive and holistic approach that addresses the root causes of conflict and bolsters the inclusion of women in decision-making processes. In that context, achieving true social peace requires sound and inclusive political, economic and social structures. My delegation endorses the recommendations contained in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/900) that promote equal and timely access to basic services, the elimination of discriminatory laws and practices, the strengthening of women's political representation, the consolidation of the rule of law and support for sustainable economic development. In our recognition of the contribution of women, their ability to provide key early warnings, their perspectives on tensions in social relations, their awareness of threats to personal, family and community security in the fight against extremism in local discourses and their role in mediation, Morocco has undertaken several initiatives and is actively participating in others.

Those include the Spanish-Moroccan Initiative on Mediation in the Mediterranean Region, launched in 2012; Morocco's involvement in the network of focal points on the theme of women and peace and security, established by Spain in 2015; and Morocco's involvement in the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, launched by Italy in 2017. In addition, on 7 September 2016 in Rabat, Morocco hosted an international conference on the theme of women and peace and security, which followed up on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The conference examined the issues of the role of women in mediation and conflict prevention in terms of de-radicalization, as well as best practices for preventing sexual violence in times of conflict. Another initiative in Morocco is that of the employment of hundreds of women as preachers known as morchidates, in mosques and religious institutions across the country. Those women highlight the true teachings of religion, which are based on tolerance and the acceptance of others and far from any misinterpretation or radical orientation. They also provide advice on various issues, including women's legal rights and family planning.

Another aspect is the regular deployment of female personnel in contingents of the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Moreover, the rapidly deployable battalion that Morocco has deployed in MONUSCO, which is currently in its final phase of deployment, has a specifically women-based unit. Similarly, by the end of 2018, Morocco intends to meet the target of women making up 15 per cent of its experts on mission and military observers.

Allow me to conclude by highlighting the following points. Women are the most vulnerable and targeted members of populations in situations of conflict. Their contribution to peace negotiations is undeniable and invaluable. Their participation in peace processes increases the prospects of conflict resolution, facilitates the sustainability of peace agreements and promotes national reconciliation and socioeconomic reintegration.

Empowering women in peacebuilding processes requires collective and coordinated action by all actors of society. Civil society and women's rights organizations play a valuable role. They can more quickly identify threats and tensions, provide an independent analysis of any given situation and create peacebuilding networks.

In two years, we will celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). That will be an opportunity for us all to take stock of two decades of significant progress towards the emancipation of women and their participation in conflict resolution. It will also be an opportunity to look beyond 2020.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. Srivihok (Thailand): Thailand aligns itself with the statement made earlier on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Thailand welcomes the focus of this year's Security Council open debate — women's political and economic empowerment as one of the means to effectively implement the women and peace and security agenda and sustaining peace through conflict prevention, as well as broader efforts to maintain international peace and security.

Resolution 1325 (2000), together with the other seven resolutions adopted by the Security Council on women and peace and security, have formed a strong foundation and normative framework for the operationalization of that important agenda. Since 2000, a number of innovations have been put in place — including the establishment, in recent years, of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, and the Women, Peace and Security National Focal Point Networks, in which Thailand has been actively involved.

There has also been significant progress in the Council recently with increased attention to the women and peace and security agenda in response to crises, such as new provisions in the mandates of peacekeeping operations that call for women's participation in security processes. Thailand welcomes the Secretary-General's new agenda that aims to fully align with the core purpose of the women and peace and security agenda, including through the meaningful participation of women in disarmament.

Thailand firmly supports the women and peace and security agenda and believes that we are all responsible for translating it into action, which includes closing implementation gaps at national and international levels. Thailand views that agenda in a holistic manner, with an emphasis on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we reaffirmed that the empowerment of women and girls and gender equality are key elements for conflict prevention and international peace and security. Thailand has therefore aligned the implementation of that agenda with its national gender equality strategy in areas ranging from development and prevention to sustaining peace.

Our implementation of women and peace and security agenda has also been part of our country's report to the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Moreover, we submitted a voluntary report on the status of the iplementation of the women and peace and security agenda, including data and analysis to assist in the preparation of the 2018 Secretary-General report on women and peace and security (S/2018/900).

One of the notable cross-cutting action plans in the report was the integration of the Women Empowerment Fund, established in 2012, to provide grants and loans to women for development-related projects that increase economic opportunities for women, in line with Thailand's national measures and guidelines on women and peace and security for the period 2017-2020. Projects are now being launched in areas such as capacity-building, effective negotiation and mediation, engagement with community leaders and fund allocation to promote women-led entrepreneurship.

On the international front, Thailand has been an ardent supporter of women's participation in peacekeeping missions. Seven of 27 Thai peacekeepers serving at our three peacekeeping missions are women, accounting for 20 per cent of the total. Thai women peacekeepers are also at the forefront of community engagement efforts to promote sustainable development throughout their services in peacekeeping missions.

In conclusion, Thailand is committed to continuing to do its part at home and abroad to genuinely advance gender equality and empower women, both politically and economically, and to maintain international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mrs. Rugwabiza (Rwanda): I congratulate you, Mr. President, and Bolivia on your presidency of the Security Council this month, and I thank you for organizing today's debate. It is not a surprise that Bolivia has chosen the theme "Promoting the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and sustaining peace through women's political and economic empowerment", given Bolivia's achievements and commitment to inclusiveness and gender equality. It is a pleasure to note that Bolivia has the third-highest percentage of women in Parliament, after Cuba and Rwanda. I also thank the Secretary-General, the Under-Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UN-Women, as well Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah, for their statements and informative briefings this morning.

The Security Council has adopted several resolutions on women's political and economic empowerment, and

women's increased participation in efforts aimed at ending conflict. Indeed, since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we now have a comprehensive framework consisting of four pillars — prevention, participation, protection and recovery. This debate gives us an opportunity to take stock of the progress made, but also to discuss concrete measures we need to take collectively to ensure more meaningful participation by women in peace and security — not because it looks good or because it will make us look good, but because the meaningful participation of women in the prevention, mediation and resolution of conflicts, as well as in the negotiation of peace agreements, is the only way to resolve conflicts durably and to accelerate post-conflict recovery. We know that women shoulder the the heaviest human burden of conflicts. They therefore have the highest incentive for peace. In that regard, Rwanda believes that women not only should but must absolutely be part of all peace processes.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, and as the entire Great Lakes region was mired in instability, my country faced an insurgency that threatened to spoil the reconstruction and national cohesion efforts that were under way. To deal with that threat at the time, the Rwandan Government turned to women whose relatives had joined the insurgents, in an innovative programme that we called "Come and see, go and tell". Those women would act as emissaries to reach out to their brothers, their husbands and their relatives who had joined the insurgency and would make a case for them to return home. They took ownership of the programme and their actions were vital to the successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

Another measure that substantively contributed to conflict prevention in Rwanda is the revision of all land reform laws, including inheritance laws. That has ensured equal rights to access and ownership of land for women and men. As a result, today in Rwanda more women than men own land titles and land-related conflicts have drastically dropped. Impact assessments of our land reforms have shown that land ownership by women has contributed significantly to the economic empowerment of families and local communities.

It is important to recognize the importance of home-grown solutions and traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution. Wherever armed conflict breaks out, the social fabric breaks down. With that breakdown, we find ourselves more often reverting to traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution. However, that works only when we have a social fabric that is still in place and that we can still mobilize. I am emphasizing that point because I believe that, as we work towards the implementation of the agenda under discussion, we really should put in efforts to involve the guardians of peace, who are usually the women and elders in society, to revive the traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution and mediation. Locally owned mechanisms would ensure ownership in the community and increase the chances of successful conflict resolution. External support and partnerships are more effective and more sustainable when they complement and build on local and home-grown solutions.

Women's meaningful participation in the social and political life in Rwanda has reaped benefits and dividends of peace and social and economic gains. We see the clear link between the pillars of prevention, participation, protection and recovery. It follows that women's participation in conflict prevention necessitates their participation at the decision-making table where agendas are set and agreements crafted. That requires the full involvement of women at all levels of governance. Just last week, the President of the Republic appointed a fully gender-balanced Cabinet, and we were happy for once to be able to compete with our brothers and sisters from Ethiopia. That builds on Rwanda's already exemplary track record of women's empowerment in other sectors. Women occupy 61 per cent of seats in the Rwandan Parliament. Fifty per cent of our judges are women, and 50 per cent of our provincial governors are women. Those numbers are well beyond the constitutional quota requirement, which is over 30 per cent. The quota requirement was used as an entry point concerning the rights of women, but women have been able to deliver to the citizens and the constituencies, earning women the trust and support of the population that allows them to go far beyond the constitutional requirement.

I would like to say that key to the turnaround that is often spoken about regarding Rwanda is women's participation. It is the backbone of Rwanda's ongoing social and economic transformation. On that we can speak from experience. Without women's full participation, we would never have been able to achieve what we have achieved in the areas of peace and security and on the political and economic fronts. Women's participation has now become ingrained in

our way of life. I would like to conclude with three simple recommendations.

First, we really need to make more effective use of existing platforms. We have a number of very useful platforms. We cannot mention them all here, but they include FemWise-Africa, the African Women Leaders Network, as well as existing networks at the national, regional and global levels. We need to encourage women to make use of such networks and increase their meaningful participation in the area of peace and security.

Secondly, as was also underlined by the Secretary-General this morning, in Rwanda we fully believe that what is not measured never gets done. We therefore really need an assessment and a strong accountability mechanism, both for ourselves as members and as to how this agenda is implemented here at Headquarters and in peacekeeping and political missions in the field.

Last, but not least, we fully concur with the recommendations of the Secretary-General, and we will spare no effort on our part to implement them.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Djibouti.

Mrs. Hassan (Djibouti): At the outset, Djibouti wishes to express its gratitude to the delegation of Bolivia for taking the leadership during its presidency to organize this important annual Security Council debate on the issue of women and peace and security. We furthermore wish to express our gratitude for the concept note (see S/2018/904, annex) drafted in preparation for this meeting, as well as for the useful briefings provided to us this morning in the Chamber.

Djibouti aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Ghana on behalf of the Group of friends of the African Women Leaders Network.

(*spoke in French*)

With today's growing number of complex conflicts, it is more important than ever to find the path to peacebuilding, which is an economic imperative for all. With resolution 1325 (2000) and the seven resolutions that build upon it, we have the necessary commitments and instruments. Now we must give life to those instruments and commitments while encouraging greater harmonization between them and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Agenda 2063 of the African Union and, more important, national programmes. Prevention is essential, especially in substantial investments in education, the management of natural resources such as water, job creation, the protection of women and girls and the promotion of their role and leadership in the search for peace. The full and effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda remains a priority for Djibouti. I will focus on three points in that regard.

First, as affirmed in the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved. Much effort has been expended on this agenda, but much remains to be done.

Turning to my second point, we can note only with regret that the impact of climate change on security affects women disproportionately. Climate change limits women's access to essential resources such as water, thereby reinforcing the negative consequences of conflict for women. According to the report of the Secretary-General presented this morning:

(*spoke in English*)

> "For the fifth year in a row, wars, violence and persecution drove forced displacement worldwide to a new high: 68.5 million people displaced at the end of 2017." (*S/2018/900, para. 4*)

(*spoke in French*)

As a result, our responses to peace and security issues need to address both climate issues and gender inequality. In that context, we underscore the importance of adopting appropriate risk-assessment and management strategies. Those tools pursue both the immediate objective of mitigating the triggers and effects of violent conflict, while seeking to build peace and move towards the long-term objectives of prevention and sustainable peace.

With regard to my third and final point, my country has worked to promote women's participation in processes of women's economic empowerment, in governance and in justice. Many sectoral public policies in that regard have been put in place and have been the subject of a national gender programme.

Article 1 of Djibouti's Constitution established gender equality in civil and political rights. On 11 January, the Government of Djibouti was able to get a law passed by Parliament that established a quota of 25 per cent for eligible positions reserved for women on different lists. Currently, in the public administration, thanks to a legal framework and political will for equal participation, women represent approximately 25 per cent of the workforce.

My delegation fully shares the goal of fully implementing resolution 1325 (2000) by 2020. The Council can count on Djibouti to work with it to achieve that goal. As other speakers have alluded to, the issue of women's economic empowerment, the enjoyment of their fundamental rights and their role within their families and communities is something that must be cultivated and encouraged. It is not only a moral issue, but one of economics and prosperity.

I would like to conclude by reiterating that this theme concerns not only all those sitting around this table, but also all the Members of the Organization. Therefore, what can, and should, we do? In two years' time, resolution 1325 (2000) will be 20 years old. Djibouti believes that by 2020 we must to everything we can to ensure that women's voices are heard at the peace-negotiating table, but also in this Chamber. Today women can be the drivers of a new approach, a new concept and a new paradigm.

Finally, Djibouti associates itself with all those who have warmly congratulated the Ethiopian Government following the appointment of its first woman President, Ms. Zewde.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

Ms. Simonyan (Armenia): Armenia would like to express appreciation to the Bolivian presidency of the Security Council for the choice of the theme for the present debate. The women and peace and security agenda provides an important normative framework for strengthening our collective efforts towards conflict prevention, recovery, rehabilitation and sustaining peace.

We share the concerns of the Secretary-General about the persisting challenges facing the protection of international human rights and humanitarian law across conflicts, particularly with regard to the rights of women and girls, who are still at an increased risk of violence, injustice and inequality, including in terms of access to essential services, resilience and livelihood opportunities. The Secretary-General's report (S/2018/900) points out to disturbing prevalence of gender-based violence in situations of conflict. Armenia is a strong advocate for the protection of the rights of women living in conflict areas. A failure to promote these efforts can threaten peace and security processes and undermine our collaborative efforts to protect at-risk populations. The United Nations system should do more to engage affected populations and support those who raise their voices.

Armenia welcomes the special focus of the Secretary-General's report on the central role of women's meaningful participation and representation to prevent conflict and sustain peace. We also acknowledge the important efforts for advancing women's representation and leadership across the entire United Nations system.

This spring was a momentous time in Armenian history, during which the citizens of Armenia, with youth and women at the forefront, fully exercised their fundamental freedoms of expression, belief and opinion. The Government of Armenia has since promoted the sense of confidence in women's meaningful participation in public affairs and political processes.

Armenia is placing high priority on fundamental reforms aiming to accelerate gender equality and women's empowerment outcomes. They include enhancing women's participation in decision-making positions and increasing women's representation in politics. We are currently in the final stage of the elaboration of the national action plan for resolution 1325 (2000), following an inclusive process of extensive public consultations involving civil society. The adoption of the action plan, upon the completion of the finalization procedure, will mark an important milestone in translating the objectives of resolution 1325 (2000) into specific commitments and action.

Armenia is fully committed to the promotion of gender-sensitive policies, having embraced the women and peace and security agenda as a priority in our national and foreign policies. This year, Armenia was elected to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. We take this opportunity to renew our commitment to global efforts for women's empowerment and the enhancement of opportunities, as well as gender equality in all facets of economic, political and social life.

(*spoke in French*)

Earlier this month, Armenia hosted the Summit of la Francophonie in Yerevan. One of the main documents adopted at the Yerevan Summit was the Francophonie strategy for the promotion of equality between women and men, and the rights and empowerment of women and girls. The strategy recognizes that women and women's organizations and networks play an important role in promoting peace, mobilizing peace movements and preserving communities, in particular in conflict situations, when their economic and social responsibilities increase. The strategy also recognizes that the participation of women from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds in peace processes creates the conditions for an inclusive approach conducive to genuine national reconciliation, which is necessary for the effective implementation of peace agreements.

In conclusion, Armenia stands ready to support commitments to increase women's participation in peace processes and to increase their representation at all levels of decision-making. We are convinced that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, with their promise of leaving no one behind, will be possible only through resolute commitment and concerted efforts to empower women in an inclusive and equitable way at all levels.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Ms. Darisuren.

Ms. Darisuren: I am honoured to be here today representing the Secretary-General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The women and peace and security agenda's integrated approach resonates strongly with the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. The OSCE recognizes that the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the human dimensions of security are tightly intertwined. We particularly welcome that this year's open debate puts strong emphasis on women's political and economic empowerment and on women's meaningful participation in all aspects of preventing and resolving conflicts and building peaceful societies.

By now the evidence is indisputable that the meaningful engagement of women in peace processes leads to more effective and sustainable outcomes. A failure to include them is a missed opportunity to use every possible factor to achieve peace. However, in the OSCE area, women's meaningful participation in peace processes remains a problem. There is underrepresentation of women within negotiating parties, as well as in OSCE mediation teams.

To overcome that challenge, the OSCE Mediation Support Team and the Gender Section are developing a toolkit on the inclusion of women in peace processes. The toolkit will identify how women are engaged in peace work in the contexts where the Organization supports formal negotiation or dialogue-facilitation processes. It will outline practical steps and measures to increase women's inclusion and to bridge the gap between women's peacebuilding efforts and the official negotiation formats.

The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine is present on the ground in eastern Ukraine with a particular mandate to facilitate dialogue in order to reduce tensions on the ground. That includes facilitating so-called windows of silence for critical infrastructure repairs to enable the flow of water and electricity to the civilian population.

In the communities in eastern Ukraine that are heavily impacted by violence, the OSCE monitors observe the resilience and community spirit of the many women active in village councils, in civil society, as teachers, and in the distribution of humanitarian aid on a daily basis. Women's involvement is crucial when it comes to preventing further escalation of tensions, bringing peace and keeping it. OSCE reports about those activities support women's voices to be heard at the higher levels of decision-making, where women remain underrepresented.

The prevention of violent conflicts is far cheaper than responding to conflicts after they have broken out. Women's inclusion in political, economic and social life is a key factor influencing society's propensity for conflict. Yet women continue to be underrepresented in governing structures, and particularly in decision-making positions. At the moment, approximately 28 per cent of members of the national parliaments in the OSCE region are women. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights facilitates and supports institutional change, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building to advance women's representation and influence in political and public life. For example, the Office supported the Equal Opportunities Caucus of the Ukrainian Parliament in organizing the first-ever Ukrainian Women's Congress, in 2017.

There are numerous examples of OSCE field operations in supporting women's political participation at the local and national levels in electoral and security sector reforms. In the area of economic empowerment, the OSCE is particularly engaged in the enhancement of women's entrepreneurship and in creating equal economic opportunities.

We in the OSCE have supported Governments and civil society in 25 participating States to develop results-oriented national action plans to implement resolution 1325 (2000). Currently, almost 60 per cent of the 57 States participating in the OSCE have adopted a national action plan. The most recent country to adopt such a plan was Albania, where the OSCE was able to closely support its preparation process. However, national action plans must also be effectively implemented. In our future activities we will be paying particular attention to the gaps in, and challenges for, the implementation of the action plans. We will continue our efforts to empower women to fully participate in political and economic fields, as well as in the security sector.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Ms. Yánez Loza (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to thank Bolivia for convening this open debate and to congratulate its Permanent Mission on the work it has conducted throughout its Council presidency this month. We welcome the introduction of new issues for discussion, drawing attention to ways in which we might reinvigorate the Security Council's working methods.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of Ecuador on the political and economic empowerment of women and their meaningful and active participation in the quest for peace — from the prevention and resolution of conflicts to the implementation of initiatives aimed at the economic recovery of women in post-conflict situations and their greater representation at all levels of decision-making.

The Ecuadorian State has in place a solid legal framework that guarantees the validity, exercise and enforceability of women's rights, based on two fundamental pillars: the Constitution, which explicitly addresses gender equality, and the internationally binding instruments ratified by the State. Moreover, we have integrated the gender perspective in a cross-cutting manner throughout our development plan, which recognizes the equal participation of men and women in both public and private life in order to consolidate socioeconomic growth in harmony with nature.

Ecuador is committed to the political and economic empowerment of women and their meaningful and active participation in the quest for peace. In that regard, we are striving to make women and men equal at all educational levels nationwide and we have implemented our comprehensive health-care model that includes the incorporation of a gender focus when developing public policies.

Ecuador is also firmly committed to facilitating decent work for women and their access to decision-making processes. The Government's programmes to reduce underemployment and unemployment encourage both the participation of women in the labour market and reduction of the wage gap. Moreover, the country's organic law on electoral and political organizations demands equal participation in the decision-making processes and at all levels of power.

With regard to conflict prevention and resolution, the Constitution establishes that Ecuador is a constitutional State of rights that will adopt affirmative measures of action promoting genuine equality in favour of rights holders who find themselves in a situation of inequality, as well as establishing priority protection in the public and private arenas for victims of sexual violence. The Constitution recognizes the right of people to live free from all forms of violence.

Ecuador undertook a major national crusade to eradicate discrimination and violence against women. In that context, we highlight our integral organic law to prevent and eradicate violence against women, which entered into force in February. That constituted an important milestone at the national level and ensures the involvement of women in working towards its implementation. Ecuador also has a national plan for the eradication of gender violence, which was established as a public policy in 2007.

Furthermore, the Constitution determines that the armed forces of Ecuador are an institution for the protection of the rights, liberties and guarantees of citizens and that its members are judged solely on judicial function. As of 2008, trials before military courts ceased to exist, which reflects the determination of the State to have impartial judges and thereby avoid impunity. The incorporation of women into the armed

forces has increased since 2009, when military women made up 1.1 per cent of the total number of troops, and then again by 2012, where it more than doubled to 2.11 per cent. This year, the number of women troops stands at 3.5 per cent. Ecuador currently contributes women officers as observers in the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.

The Ministry of National Defence incorporates the concept of defence as a public asset and, in that context, the gender approach is included in its defence policy agenda. Human rights are also considered as an area of action for the political management of defence and include the promotion of policies for gender equality and practices for peaceful coexistence and respect for the cultural identity of its members, as well as the effective implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1889 (2009).

In conclusion, we welcome these spaces where we can express ourselves about the political and economic empowerment of women and their meaningful and active participation in the search for peace. Likewise, we express our sincere desire to join efforts for a productive and successful dialogue that promotes gender equality and the advancement of women in all areas and in all fields. These are essential elements to honour the commitment to leave no one behind.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Trinidad and Tobago.

Ms. Beckles (Trinidad and Tobago): Trinidad and Tobago is pleased to uphold its tradition of participating in this annual open debate on the important topic of promoting the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and sustaining peace through women's political and economic empowerment.

Trinidad and Tobago recognizes the competence of the Security Council under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations in matters related to the maintenance of international peace and security and wishes to express its satisfaction that the issue of women and peace and security remains prominent on the Council's agenda. My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his important remarks on the subject. We also welcome the very informative briefings by the Executive Director of UN-Women, as well as the representatives of civil society.

For Trinidad and Tobago, the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women remain pivotal to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Against that backdrop, we welcome the Secretary-General's disarmament agenda, entitled "Securing Our Common Future", which has a strong foundation in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We furthermore commend the Secretary-General for his recognition and advocacy with respect to the meaningful inclusion of the equal, full and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes related to disarmament. My delegation remains appreciative that the Secretary-General has prioritized gender parity as a moral duty and an operational necessity.

Eighteen years ago, resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted by the Security Council. Trinidad and Tobago remains steadfast in its view that the seminal character of that resolution cannot be overemphasized, as it was the first to recognize the need for the involvement of both women and men in efforts to attain sustainable peace and security. Similarly, we recognize the distinctive nature of subsequent resolutions on sustaining peace, as well as the importance of women's leadership and meaningful participation in the prevention and resolution of conflict and peacebuilding, as embodied in the relevant resolutions on sustaining peace. Our support for those resolutions is not based only on our legal obligations under the Charter, but also on our own national laws, which have entrenched the inalienable rights of women into our domestic legal framework.

Trinidad and Tobago subscribes to the rule of law as a fundamental safeguard in the advancement and protection of the rights of women. We therefore view as essential our continued adherence to obligations under a number of international instruments that seek to protect the rights of women and girls, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The vulnerability of women and girls in situations of armed conflict, and, in my country's specific circumstances, armed violence, continues to engage our attention. Trinidad and Tobago remains a strong proponent of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). We submit that the ATT represents a significant achievement in the global fight to eliminate the diversion of conventional arms to the illicit market, which could reduce, if not end, untold suffering, particularly for women and girls. The Caribbean Community played an important role in securing a particular provision of the Treaty that was

cause for much celebration — the inclusion of language that protects women and girls from armed gender-based violence.

In the spirit of advancing the dual agenda of the attainment of international peace and security and the empowerment of women, in 2010 Trinidad and Tobago introduced the first General Assembly resolution on women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control — resolution 65/69. It is our view that the resolution complements resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on the matter by focusing on the participation of women in processes geared towards the advancement of disarmament, international peace and security. The present iteration of the resolution is currently being addressed within the context of the First Committee of the General Assembly and continues to enjoy the support of a large number of States.

As a current member of the Executive Board of UN-Women, Trinidad and Tobago pledges to continue to work with Member States for the universal achievement of gender equality. We recognize UN-Women's strategic plan for the period 2018-2021 as an important instrument that could contribute to the attainment of that objective. Additionally, for the first time, a national of Trinidad and Tobago was elected to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women for the period 2019-2021. We are grateful to the international community for the confidence entrusted to Trinidad and Tobago in that regard.

In conclusion, Trinidad and Tobago takes this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to the advancement and empowerment of women. We remain committed to working with other Member States and our partners at the regional, hemispheric and global levels to promote the involvement of women as equal partners in matters related to peace and security, including at all levels of decision-making processes.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Romania.

Mr. Jinga (Romania) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Bolivia for its initiative to organize this open debate on women and peace and security.

Romania aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union. I would now like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

This year, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to two people for their efforts to stop the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. The tireless efforts of Nadia Murad and Denis Mukwege to raise awareness and counter the abominable practices carried out against women and girls affected by conflict must be a source of inspiration for all of us — first in identifying and holding accountable the perpetrators of those acts; then in seeking justice, retribution and psychosocial support for victims; and, finally, in allowing survivors to testify against the harmful practices of which they were victims.

In that context, we are deeply concerned about the intimidation of, and reprisals against, women peace activists and humanitarian activists. Their experience and fears should not be silenced, but rather expressed and considered in decision-making processes. In that regard, integration, non-discrimination and gender parity play a vital role in peace and security strategies. Greater visibility in the public arena for those women is long overdue. Listening to them and enabling them to engage in efforts to build and maintain peace and to prevent or minimize conflict is the right approach to achieve lasting solutions.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by armed conflict and its long-term consequences. Safeguarding their human rights, ensuring that they are protected from sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking is a common refrain. But to turn those words into an everyday reality around the world, we need to increase the participation, leadership and presence of women and girls in decision-making processes.

The participation of women officers in peacekeeping operations is critical to their operational effectiveness and has a direct impact on the sustainability of peace. In 2018 more than 11,000 police officers were deployed in 15 United Nations missions, of whom only 11 per cent are women. Reaching the 20 per cent goal by 2020 is a major challenge for the United Nations. Those numbers reflect the magnitude of the challenge. Currently, female Romanian officers account for 13 per cent of its staff in the police contingents deployed in peacekeeping operations.

As a candidate country for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2020-2021, Romania renews its strong commitment to enhancing the participation of women in peacekeeping missions under the banner of the United Nations.

For many reasons, women are at the heart of peacebuilding processes. The rebuilding of societies and economies affected by armed conflict relies heavily on women's contributions. That translates into their need to have better access to education and information, employment, financial services and markets, and the need for them to participate in the political debate. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to provide them with better institutional, financial and legal support, as well as access to resources and technology, in order to leverage their tenacity, energy and adaptability. The time has come.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Malta.

Mr. Inguanez (Malta): First and foremost, I would like to thank the Bolivian presidency of the Security Council for organizing today's open debate on women and peace and security, and for giving due importance to this dimension of peace and security. We are pleased to participate at this important debate today and look forward to continue engaging with the international community on this issue. I would also like to thank the Executive Director of UN-Women and Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah for sharing their insights and experience with us today.

Malta aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union. I would like to present a few additional remarks in my national capacity.

We are pleased that women's empowerment, gender equality and women's participation in public and political life is increasingly taking centre stage in the work of the Security Council. We consider resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent related resolutions central to the Council's work in the maintenance of international peace and security. Clearly, in achieving peace and security, we cannot ignore half of our population. Women should be central participants in society. They should be able to participate freely in local and international debates about their futures. They should be able to hold public office. And they should be able to become decision-makers in Governments and society. Women should also be allowed unhindered participation in discussions and debates outside of their home countries. As the Secretary-General states in his report, women have an equal right to participate in all efforts to prevent and resolve conflict (S/2018/900).

In an overwhelming number of cases, women suffer direct and deliberate violence in conflict zones. The adoption of resolution 1820 (2008) recognized sexual violence as a weapon of war. The March 2018 report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2018/250) presents all of us with a sobering read. The report also makes it clear that much more is required to combat the gender-based violence that is ravaging generations of women and girls.

We take careful note of the Secretary-General's concern as outlined in October's report about the lack of progress across the most fundamental commitments to peace and security, human rights and gender equality. We agree that sustainable approaches to the challenges highlighted throughout the present report will require our creativity and long-term commitment to move beyond one-off project-based approaches to women and peace and security to achieve system-level and structural changes.

Gender equality is a priority. Sustainable Development Goal 5, as outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, should be one of the main overarching principles for all States Members of the United Nations in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment. Over the past years, Malta has taken renewed steps to enhance gender equality. A new law against gender-based violence and domestic violence was enacted this year that incorporates the provisions of the Istanbul Convention. Furthermore, a focal point on women and peace and security was appointed within our Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion.

Malta welcomes the Secretary-General's plan to enhance women's participation at all levels. It is important for the United Nations to be seen as an example of an international organization actively recruiting and promoting women to high-level posts. Women and girls need examples to emulate and on which to chart their future career paths. Demonstrating actively that women in decision-making roles are the norm and not the exception will be an important legacy of the United Nations for generations to come.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Ms. Rodríguez Martínez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is grateful to the Plurinational

State of Bolivia for convening this important open debate and for drafting the concept note to guide our deliberations today (S/2018/904, annex). We are also grateful for the Secretary-General's briefing, as well as that of the Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka — whose work has been defining in the promotion of this agenda — and Ms. Randa Siniora Atallah.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2018/900) on the crucial issue before us today concludes that significant obstacles remain for women to participate effectively in the maintenance and consolidation of peace. Humankind continues to witness the devastating consequences of violations of international humanitarian law in the armed conflicts that plague the world today, particularly for women and girls, who are the first victims of the dramatic consequences of war and who are also subjected to recurrent and systematic sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as brutal gender violence.

Our country is convinced that the participation and contributions of women at all levels, phases and areas linked to the prevention and settlement of conflicts are essential to achieve lasting and sustained peace. There will be no international peace and security if women and girls — who constitute more than half of the population affected by armed conflicts — are not effectively included and integrated.

Faced with those critical scenarios, it is vital to have the highest political commitment when the various national and international bodies come to allocate resources that are fair, sufficient and predictable, aimed at eradicating social exclusion and inequality and the feminization of poverty, and to promote structural processes of resilience, institutional capacity and access to essential benefits for women, addressing not only their technical training and skills to exercise advocacy but also the coverage of their basic and security needs.

We reiterate that the full realization of all those commitments and ideals in favour of women will not be possible while some States and entities continue to implement unilateral coercive measures against other sovereign States for political motives in economic, commercial and financial terms. We once again condemn those measures as illegal and in violation of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, and because they violate peace and stability and generate suffering in more than a third of humankind, only succeeding in pursuing the interventionist agenda and the war of its promoters.

The United Nations must continue its work to improve the training of all personnel deployed in the field and to have a greater presence of experts — especially women — on gender issues and advisers on the protection of women in peacekeeping operations. In that context, we categorically condemn all incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse committed in the framework of any peacekeeping operation, as well as by the military, police or civilian personnel of the Organization deployed on the ground. Zero tolerance for those crimes must continue to be a substantive commitment by the United Nations and the entire international community in order to continue working resolutely towards their prevention and to bring to justice all those responsible for those heinous and immoral crimes.

We also reiterate our call to all States, entities and individuals to fully respect the provisions of international law and the resolutions adopted by this organ regarding the prohibition of supplying weapons and providing financial and logistical support to extremist and terrorist groups, so that there may be an effective neutralization of their operational capacity and abhorrent practices of exploitation and sexual violence against women as an instrument of war and terror.

In conclusion, Venezuela takes this opportunity to reaffirm its firm belief that women are protagonists and essential drivers in the struggle for the emancipation of our peoples. It is therefore incumbent upon us to make the establishment of the conditions necessary to their equality and access to equal opportunities a top priority at the vanguard of inclusive, equitable and transformative processes of development and peacebuilding.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the observer of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Ms. Hutchinson: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to address the Security Council as the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security. I am pleased to be able to contribute to this ongoing dialogue, which is a priority for the Alliance.

The adoption of the women and peace and security resolutions and the work of the Council have helped us reflect on the broader aspects of security, which address

the essential yet often missing influence that women exert in reshaping the agenda for peace. We understand the strong correlation between gender equality and a country's stability. Women's empowerment leads to more peaceful and inclusive communities and is vital for conflict prevention. The treatment of women in any society is a barometer by which we can detect other forms of oppression, and a rise in violence can be measured through the decrease of human rights and shrinking spaces for women's voices.

As a military and political alliance, NATO recognizes that the security needs of women and men are different. However, we have sometimes missed the opportunity to integrate their diverse perspectives. We are now making sure that all our work adequately reflects the whole-of-population approach. Sustainable peace will not be achieved without women's empowerment and participation.

NATO is strongly committed to advancing the women and peace and security agenda. This year, our Heads of State and Government reinforced that commitment by endorsing a new policy and action plan on women, peace and security that enjoys the support of the 29 allies and many of our partners. The new policy builds on a framework of three guiding principles: integration, inclusiveness and integrity. Those principles, aligned with global women and peace and security commitments, draw from NATO's common values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and obligations under the Charter of the United Nations.

Our principles reinforce the goal that gender equality must be integral to all NATO-led activities, operations and missions. We aim to implement that agenda by dismantling barriers that stand in the way of the full participation of women in the Alliance and national forces, but, more important, we will enhance the accountability of the women and peace and security mandate by ensuring that we adopt the highest standards of professional and personal conduct within both the civilian and the military staff of NATO. Our new policy represents the next step in advancing the agenda within the Alliance and reaffirms the continuous commitment of NATO allies and partners to the integration of gender perspectives and the women and peace and security priorities. The policy will become an integral part of everyday business and support our Alliance in addressing the complex challenges of the twenty-first century.

Today's global threats are complex and multifaceted and complicate the security landscape in unprecedented ways. Therefore, we need to respond adequately through a holistic approach to security. The link between security and economic stability is well proven. Women's economic fragility is reinforced by political instability. We must do better to support women in being agents of their own future. NATO is actively promoting and enhancing engagement with women's civil society organizations to strengthen the voices of those most affected by conflict. We have established the Civil Society Advisory Panel on Women, Peace and Security, which is an independent coalition of women's organizations that represent the global constituency of those most affected by inequality and conflict. The Panel challenges us to broaden our understanding of security, promote a more inclusive approach and address the challenges to defence and security.

The members of the Panel have raised concerns about the current threats to peace around the world and highlighted their frustration at the slow progress of the women and peace and security agenda. We have listened, we have heard their voices, and we have responded by making sure that the integration of gender and the inclusion of women's voices are mainstreamed throughout NATO's work. That is the essential factor in the success of peace and security. Women everywhere highlight the need to understand and reinforce preventative measures, which include gender perspectives in early-warning analysis. We must recognize that violations of women's rights and women's political and economic isolation are indicators of potential conflict. The Civil Society Advisory Panel urges us to make gender more visible within security responses and provide a clear vision for the future that relies on coordinated efforts with international organizations and civil society.

Consistency and coherence across the international system are critical if we are to advance this agenda. We must articulate our vision, coordinate our efforts and demonstrate our collective support while holding accountable all those responsible for implementing this mandate. Change requires courage, and courage demands commitment. The women and peace and security agenda needs collective action to ensure tangible progress. We must be courageous in our work, as we work together to achieve sustainable and lasting peace not only for women, but for everyone.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Ms. Mehdiyeva (Azerbaijan): At the outset, we would like to thank the presidency of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for convening today's open debate on women and peace and security, and to welcome the focus of this discussion on the political and economic empowerment of women.

We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his yearly report on women and peace and security (S/2018/900), which identifies the empowerment of women and gender equality as cross-cutting issues and outlines the main challenges affecting women and girls, as well as the areas in which progress has been achieved. We fully concur with the Secretary-General that the significance of the equal participation of women in the economy and in peace processes cannot be downplayed, and that factors constraining their inclusion must be tackled. Women have a critical role to play in promoting and maintaining international peace and security. Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2122 (2013) have recognized the importance of women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding.

Millions of women and girls around the world are disproportionately affected by the impacts of armed conflict, poverty, gender bias, discrimination and other forms of disparity. Conflict-related sexual violence is often used as a tool of humiliation and intimidation. The devastating health consequences of violence against women, their children and thus to society are clear. Regardless of the circumstances and settings in which violence takes place, perpetrators must be held accountable for their action. It is the responsibility of Member States to ensure that women and girls do not suffer due to their gender.

As a country a part of whose territory is under military occupation, with accompanying ethnic cleansing and other atrocity crimes committed against its civilian population, we consider the safety of civilians to be of the utmost importance. More than 1 million Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons, half of whom are women, have been displaced from their homes and have continued to suffer for the past 30 years. The international community should not remain indifferent to the plight of women and girls in armed conflicts and has a duty to protect them from harm. Among the pressing issues requiring urgent action is that of civilians, including women and children taken hostage and reported missing in connection with armed conflict. Azerbaijan continues its efforts to raise awareness of the problem at the international level, including through the relevant General Assembly resolutions and the Commission on the Status of Women, of which my country is a main sponsor.

Prevention is the most effective strategy to empower women and girls, as it allows us to pre-emptively address obstacles limiting their ability to reach their full potential. In that regard, enacting gender-responsive policies and mechanisms can create an environment that is supportive and conducive to women's success. In recent years, a number of important policies and programmes aimed at ameliorating the situation of women have been implemented in Azerbaijan.

From 2016 to 2017, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs of Azerbaijan, together with the United Nations Population Fund and other partners, carried out a project on the elaboration of the national action plan on women and peace and security. A working group on women and peace and security, representing women from different organizations, was established for that purpose and oversaw the preparation of the draft national action plan. In May 2018, the State Committee held the fifth women's forum, which was dedicated to the hundredth anniversary of women's suffrage in Azerbaijan. That event marked one of the most important milestones in the history of Azerbaijan, which in 1918 granted women the right to vote.

The economic empowerment of rural women and girls, who represent 77 per cent of the female population of Azerbaijan, is among the key priority areas of our Government. Since 2011, the State Committee and the United Nations Development Programme have jointly implemented a project on promoting rural women's participation in economic and social life. A number of women with disabilities have developed business skills, some of them have established businesses of their own, and many women have benefited from gender equality sessions held in schools. Water and sanitation systems, which were installed in six locations throughout the country, improved access to clean water and sanitation infrastructure for schoolgirls.

We have made great strides in achieving gender parity in State institutions. The representation of women in the National Assembly increased from 11 per cent in 2005 to 17 per cent in 2015. At the municipal level,

women represented 35 per cent of elected candidates after the 2014 elections, as compared to 4 per cent in 2004. The proportion of women appointed to key Government positions has also significantly increased in recent years. By the end of 2016, 80 of the 87 executive power bodies in Azerbaijan had women deputy heads. Azerbaijan has acceded to all major international agreements in the field of women's rights and gender equality. We remain committed to advancing the rights of women and ensuring their full and effective participation in the decision-making processes.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Ms. Bassols Delgado (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Bolivian presidency of the Security Council for having organized this open debate. The women and peace and security agenda was, as many members know, a priority during our recent term on the Council and continues to be so today.

We have all made progress since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). However, the data continue to show a very low participation of women in peace processes. We strongly agree with the Secretary-General's call for the adoption of concrete measures to address the practical and institutional barriers that continue to prevent the full and meaningful participation of women in all peace processes.

We welcome in particular the Secretary-General's urgent and extraordinary steps towards parity in the United Nations system and his personal commitment to improving parity in peace operations by encouraging a substantial increase in the number of women in security forces. In that context, the Foreign Ministers of Spain and Finland jointly presented an initiative called Commitment 2025 at the high-level event of the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network, held in New York on 26 September. Today, on behalf of Spain and Finland, I have the honour to share a broad outline of our Initiative.

Through the Initiative, we will undertake a series of commitments to strengthening the full and effective participation of women in peace processes between now and 2025. We will make those commitments available to all Members and to the Organization in the near future. Those commitments will include additional measures to increase the institutional representation of women at all levels in sectors relevant to the women and peace and security agenda, and especially in peace processes. They will include the appointment of women to decision-making positions in peace and security institutions.

We will commit to funding incentives for women's participation. We will work firmly and hand-in-hand with civil society to ensure that women and their organizations are included in all peace processes and negotiations, now and in the future, which could even result in the setting of numerical targets. We require international and regional organizations systematic to progress towards the full participation of women in peace processes and negotiations, including the sharing of lessons and best practices, as well as the appointment by the United Nations of gender advisers for women and peace and security. We will commit to supporting the work of the Women Mediators Networks and the Group of Friends of Mediation to ensure that their efforts are taken into account in peace processes and negotiations. We will also commit ourselves to promoting the rights of girls and women as a key element in identifying responses to extremism and terrorism. We will consider providing multi-year funding to support women's organizations in conflict-affected countries in order to strengthen institutional capacity.

Next spring, Spain will organize the third International Conference on Safe Schools within the framework of the 2015 Safe Schools Declaration initiated by Argentina and Norway. The Conference will have a special focus on the gender approach in access to education in armed conflicts. That will require an analysis on specific attacks on the access to education of women of all ages, including sexual and gender-based violence. We are convinced that women's access to all levels of education — primary, secondary and university — is a key enabler of women's full participation in peace processes; political, economic and social empowerment; and full enjoyment of human rights.

Those are the concrete and fundamental ideas and measures of Spain and Finland's Commitment 2025, which, as I have mentioned, we will present to and share with the rest of the Members in the coming weeks. That commitment will enable us to return to the fundamentals of resolution 1325 (2000) and commemorate its twentieth anniversary. At the same time, it will also enable us to move forward with definite, determined and concrete steps in the work of ensuring the real and effective participation of women in all peace processes.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan): We thank the delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for convening today's meeting on women and peace and security. We are pleased that this important issue continues to gain prominence on the agenda of the Security Council.

No other country knows it better than Afghanistan, which has faced nearly four decades of imposed conflict, resulting in weakened State institutions and severe collective trauma for our people. The impact of the conflict has been borne disproportionately by women, who saw their rights obliterated and voices repressed during the violent years of Taliban rule.

Since 2001, Afghanistan has secured tremendous gains towards the promotion and protection of human rights, particularly those of women. We have prioritized women's empowerment as a strategic objective in our overall efforts to achieve lasting peace, security and stability. Today, many women are the vibrant voice of our society. Our core efforts in advancing the rights of women are primarily based in key national frameworks, including the national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000) and the national priority programme for women's economic empowerment. Their successful implementation is reinforcing the continued effort towards turning our women into drivers of peace. We wish to also highlight the fact that our action plan and national priority programme are embedded in the Self-reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework, as the overarching umbrella for our partnership with the international community. The advancement of women will be discussed at the Novemeber ministerial conference on Afghanistan, in Geneva.

In July, we submitted our second report on our national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000). Through the plan, we seek to enable women to actively participate in shaping the future of our country by implementing various measures to reach the following objectives: first, increase the meaningful participation of women in the decision-making process and executive levels of the civil service, security, and peace and reintegration; secondly, protect women from all kinds of violence and discrimination through the implementation and amendment of existing laws and policies; thirdly, prevent violence and discrimination against women by raising awareness and public outreach; and fourthly, increase economic security for vulnerable women.

Although we are in the early implementation stages of the plan, our second report indicates continued and steady progress. In the past year, our efforts to fully implement the anti-harassment law and the penal code have enabled us to address the societal barriers that inhibit women from participating in the civil service. As a result, we have witnessed the emergence of a prominent presence of women in this field. Today, around 27 per cent of Government employees are women. Moreover, nearly 18 per cent of the High Peace Council's members are women, with four women at the executive leadership level actively taking part in decision-making processes in order to end the conflict and secure stability and lasting peace.

We have made a concerted effort to substantially increase women's role and contribution in senior Government positions across various ministries and agencies. We currently have a large number of women serving as senior-level officials in different sectors. As such, they are undertaking a proactive engagement in Afghanistan's long-term stability and development. This dynamic will continue to progress in a positive trajectory. Last week's parliamentary elections saw the vibrant participation of women both as candidates and voters, offering a glimpse of the way in which they are helping to consolidate democracy in the country. Some 28 per cent of seats in our new lower house will soon be occupied by women.

Yet, women's empowerment extends beyond the political sphere alone. Over the past two years, we have increased the number of senior positions for women to serve in our security institutions. Women are a key part of our national security forces and police, and have demonstrated exemplary courage and sacrifice in countering international terrorism and upholding the rule of law. Women recruits have joined the ranks of our forces in large numbers, thereby bolstering our aim of achieving gender equality in all sectors.

In the area of protection, we have undertaken concrete steps to introduce legislation on violence against women. We have amended existing laws and implemented a law on eliminating violence against women through our courts and other judicial institutions. Family guidance centres have been established in provincial capitals to provide legal advice, health and psychosocial services for survivors of gender-based violence. In addition, we have created specialized units within the Attorney General's Office in more than half of all provinces.

Such measures are positively impacting overall efforts to protect Afghan women. Initiatives such as public awareness campaigns, the establishment of provincial committees and military personnel trainings are all under way to mitigate and prevent gender based violence. Through the national priority programme for women's economic empowerment, we are increasing women's access to economic assets and providing them with support in owning businesses and assisting them in enhancing their job skills and financial literacy. Additionally, we have also implemented and amended policies to remove legal and societal barriers to women's economic participation.

Despite our progress, we have a number of challenges ahead of us. The biggest impediment to fully implementing our national plans is insecurity, caused by violent proxies exported from outside Afghanistan. The worsening security situation has prevented us from delivering our objectives to all provinces and consolidating the gains of the past 17 years. We once again urge the Council to take appropriate action against the orchestrators of such insecurity, based on international legal commitments and core values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

To conclude, women's empowerment and their active participation in strengthening peace and security are among our core priorities. In recent years, we have strengthened this national will by expediting the implementation of our national programmes to advance and strengthen the rights of women. Although we recognize the need for further progress, we will remain steadfast in this noble endeavour to consolidate our achievements. It is only through our persistent efforts that Afghan women will become agents of sustaining peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Molefe (South Africa): We would like to congratulate you, Sir, and the Bolivian delegation on the professional manner in which you have been conducting the work of the Council for this month.

Focusing on the political and economic inclusion of women during peace initiatives is most appropriate. Research conducted by UN-Women has shown that when women are included and participate in peace processes, there is a significant increase in the possibility of peace agreements leading to sustained peace. It is generally understood that their participation improves the chances of dispute resolution and provides a safe space for women and girls to report allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.

The Secretary-General's reform agenda, with its focus on conflict prevention as the core pillar, can be enhanced by focusing attention on the women and peace and security agenda. The focus on women's contribution to conflict prevention should not detract from our commitment to including women in all areas of peace processes. In that regard, my delegation welcomes the recent adoption of the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. The Declaration reiterates commitments made by Member States to implementing the women and peace and security agenda and its priorities. That will eliminate the disproportionate burden placed upon women in times of conflict because of sexual exploitation and abuse, marginalization, forced displacement, loss of livelihood and decreased access to education, health care services and economic opportunities.

Having women in leadership positions illustrates not only that governance and policymaking should be inclusive of women's voices but that women should also be key decision-makers. It further plays a role in gender mainstreaming through the strengthening of democratic processes to ensure the equality of women and that such processes are sensitive to women's needs and entrench women's perspectives and leadership roles.

The historic Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, whose essential purpose is to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment, highlight the need for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. In addition to SDG 5, which is dedicated to that objective, the SDGs recognize the specific challenges that women and girls face in realizing the other development goals. All of us here must ensure that the objectives of the SDGs are reflected in our national development plans and that we all do what we can to ensure that there are adequate means for achieving the Goals by 2030.

We wish to use this opportunity to highlight some of the African Union (AU) instruments that deal specifically with issues pertaining to women. Of particular importance is the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, better known as the Maputo Protocol. The Maputo Protocol seeks to ensure and guarantee women's human rights as formulated in the

Charter of the AU, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. In recognizing Member States' duties in relation to the Security Council's resolutions dealing with women, peace and security, the Maputo Protocol calls on all States parties to take appropriate measures to increase the participation of women in peacebuilding processes and for States to take measures to protect women in situations of armed conflict. That includes protecting women from sexual violence and other harmful practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation.

South Africa remains committed to ending and condemning the widespread and systemic sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls. That instrument of war is a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights. We call on all parties to fully support the survivors of these brutal acts and strongly condemn the use of sexual violence in all its forms, particularly as a tactic of war and terrorism and as an instrument of torture. Ending this evil scourge, addressing the resulting trauma and holding accountable those responsible for committing these heinous acts is integral to the reconciliation and peacebuilding process. Therefore, my delegation calls on all parties in conflict zones to create and implement commitments to combatting sexual violence, in accordance with resolution 2106 (2013) on sexual violence in conflict.

The Executive Director of UN-Women, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, recently called for renewed commitments and investments to meet the Beijing Platform for Action's now 20-year-old target of gender balance. She said,

> "If today's leaders front-load gender equality, if they start now to make good on those 20-year-old promises, we can look forward to gender equality by 2030 at the latest".

We must therefore stress that, ultimately, strengthening democracy and resilience in peaceful and inclusive societies requires women's empowerment, political participation and leadership.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Islam (Bangladesh): We thank the Bolivian presidency for organizing this open debate. We appreciate the briefing by the Secretary-General and his annual report (S/2018/900) concerning progress, challenges and gaps in implementing the women and peace and security agenda. We also thank the other briefers for sharing their insights.

We take particular note of the Secretary-General's recommendations for further mainstreaming women's participation in peace processes and in United Nations peace operations. Bangladesh is currently working to conclude the preparation of its national action plan, pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000) and its successor resolutions. We hope to finalize the process to coincide with the advent of the twentieth anniversary of the resolution.

We have often shared at the United Nations our national experience with women's empowerment in the aftermath of gaining our independence as a war-ravaged country in 1971. It was evident from the outset that without the active and meaningful participation of our women, our nation-building initiatives would not result in creating the peaceful, just and equitable society that our founding fathers had envisaged. The history of Bangladesh's development trajectory has been a story of continued forward strides by our women in every sphere of our society. The photos of two of our fighter helicopter pilots deployed in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — which were still to be found around the United Nations premises recently — have been an eloquent testimony to the heights our women have scaled so far. The deployment of our first all-female formed police unit in Haiti was a critical step towards expanding women's participation in United Nations peace operations.

However, our women and girls continue to face formidable challenges. It perhaps takes generations to bring about changes in certain entrenched societal norms that continue to retard women's advancement in the true sense. Considering the sea changes we have witnessed so far, we are aware that any such change needs to be actively facilitated in order to gain traction within society in an organic manner.

In that context, the United Nations and its many partners can indeed act as standard-bearers for societies in transition. The women and peace and security agenda has catalysed decisive and forward-looking initiatives in a number of contexts around the world towards expanding women's participation in maintaining peace and security. In Bangladesh, women's political participation has been ensured through

certain statutory provisions and affirmative action leading to their vibrant presence in all representative institutions, from the local to the national levels. The growing recruitment of women into our armed forces and other law enforcement agencies will allow us to reach our shared targets for the deployment of female peacekeepers in the near future. Our policy approach to consider gender as a cross-cutting issue across our national development strategies has reaped dividends in terms of reaching the gender-related targets in the Millennium Development Goals, and currently in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. In the course of their empowerment, our women at the grass roots have emerged as key agents of change and a preventive force against the spread of violent extremism and intolerance.

Faced with the Rohingya humanitarian crisis, we are now currently working with the relevant humanitarian partners to create safe, inclusive spaces for the women and girls residing in camps. The Independent International Fact-finding Mission on Myanmar has once again brought to the fore the inhuman brutalities unleashed against the Rohingya women by the Myanmar security forces and their local collaborators. The Fact-finding Mission concluded that rape had been used against many of these women as a premeditated tactic. In the initial days of the crisis, it was a race against time to provide necessary medical and psychosocial services to the victims. The trauma suffered by these women continues to be exacerbated in the backdrop of the prevailing uncertainty over the prospects for their safe and dignified return to their homes in Myanmar. The victims among the Rohingya women and their families have every right to seek accountability for those who perpetrated against them the gravest crimes under international law.

On our part, we have recently concluded a framework of cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict for addressing the needs of the victims. Our authorities will remain sensitized to promoting the effective participation of Rohingya women in decisions affecting their community in the present and future. We urge the Security Council to remain seized of the gender dimension of the crisis in its continued deliberations on the situation in Myanmar.

In general, Bangladesh remains committed to supporting the Secretary-General in all his initiatives to promote the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, and particularly in giving effect to his zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. As a member of the Group of Friends of Women, Peace and Security, we shall remain engaged in our efforts to enhance women's participation in mediation, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and disarmament and arms control.

We acknowledge the critical importance of preserving and augmenting the gender advisory capacities in United Nations peace operations through the allocation of adequate resources. Our delegation will lend support to pursuing any items on the women and peace and security agenda identified as unfinished from the three review exercises undertaken within the United Nations peace and security pillar in 2015.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Israel has requested the floor to make an additional statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Baror (Israel): Earlier today my colleague took her place around this table and expressed the need to have more women involved in matters of peace and security and portrayed some of the ways Israel promotes this agenda, including between Israelis and Palestinians hoping for a better future for both peoples. It is with regret that we take the floor once again to highlight the fact that those who should have advocated the agenda more than anyone else chose a different path.

The Bolivian presidency of the Security Council has chosen to invite the head of a Palestinian non-governmental organization to speak on behalf of civil society. Civil society has a major role to play in promoting women's involvement in matters of peace and security, and in Israel civil society groups are key partners in that process. However, Bolivia has chosen to invite Randa Siniora Atallah, the head of the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), which is a little more of a questionable choice.

The Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling is a Palestinian organization that is supposed to assist Palestinian women and advocate on their behalf. But in too many cases WCLAC uses its mandate to spread hatred and promote violence, all the things that we believe women's involvement could diminish when it comes to issues of peace and security.

WCLAC takes pride in Manal Tamimi as one of its key members, While Manal calls for violence against Israeli citizens and uses her social media accounts to

describe how the vampire Jews presumably drink the blood of Palestinians on their High Holy Days. That is who the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling characterized as a human rights activist in its report to the United Nations.

But perhaps we should not be surprised with the Bolivian decision to invite such a person as its speaker of choice. Bolivia itself is far from being a role model for human rights, let alone peace and security, as is well documented in Bolivia's latest Universal Periodic Review. Israel, on the contrary, is a free and open society. What we do and how we do it is open for ongoing scrutiny, first and foremos by our very own courts, which are renowned for their strong stand on behalf of human rights, although, when it comes to Israel, the world is always watching as well.

The facts are out there and are not hard to find. The truth, sadly enough, is that the biggest enemy of the Palestinian people are the Palestinian Government and Palestinian non-governmental organizations, which are invited to take a seat at the table but would rather throw stones at it instead.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make an additional statement in my capacity as representative of Bolivia, which, I promise, will be very short.

If I may, I would like to read out rule 39 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, for the benefit of the representative of Israel:

(*spoke in English*)

> "The Security Council may invite members of the Secretariat or other persons, whom it considers competent for the purpose, to supply it with information or to give other assistance in examining matters within its competence."

(*spoke in Spanish*)

It was the Security Council that made the invitation. I believe that the immense majority not just of the members of the Council but of those who were kind enough to participate in this debate was very generous in warmly welcoming the involvement of civil society in today's debate.

On the other hand, if we wish to speak of the human rights situation in my country, I would like to propose to the representative of Israel that his country allow a delegation, as has been requested on a number of occasions by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to visit the occupied territories in order to see the human rights situation on the ground of the Palestinians living in territories occupied by Israel. We have our doors open to any delegation or committee that wishes to come and look at the human rights situation in my country, of which we are absolutely proud.

I have just one more comment — I promise it will be the last — the greatest enemy of the Palestinian people today — the more than 5 million Palestinian refugees who cannot return to their lands — is the Israeli occupation, the illegal Israeli occupation. When the occupation ends, then the Palestinians will be able to enjoy the exercise of their self-determination and resolve the problems they face for themselves.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no more speakers inscribed on my list. I would like to thank all participants for their patience, commitment and contribution to today's debate. I would especially like to thank the staff of the Secretariat, in particular the entire support team that worked with us throughout this long day. A special thanks goes to the interpreters and translators.

The meeting rose at 8.25 p.m.